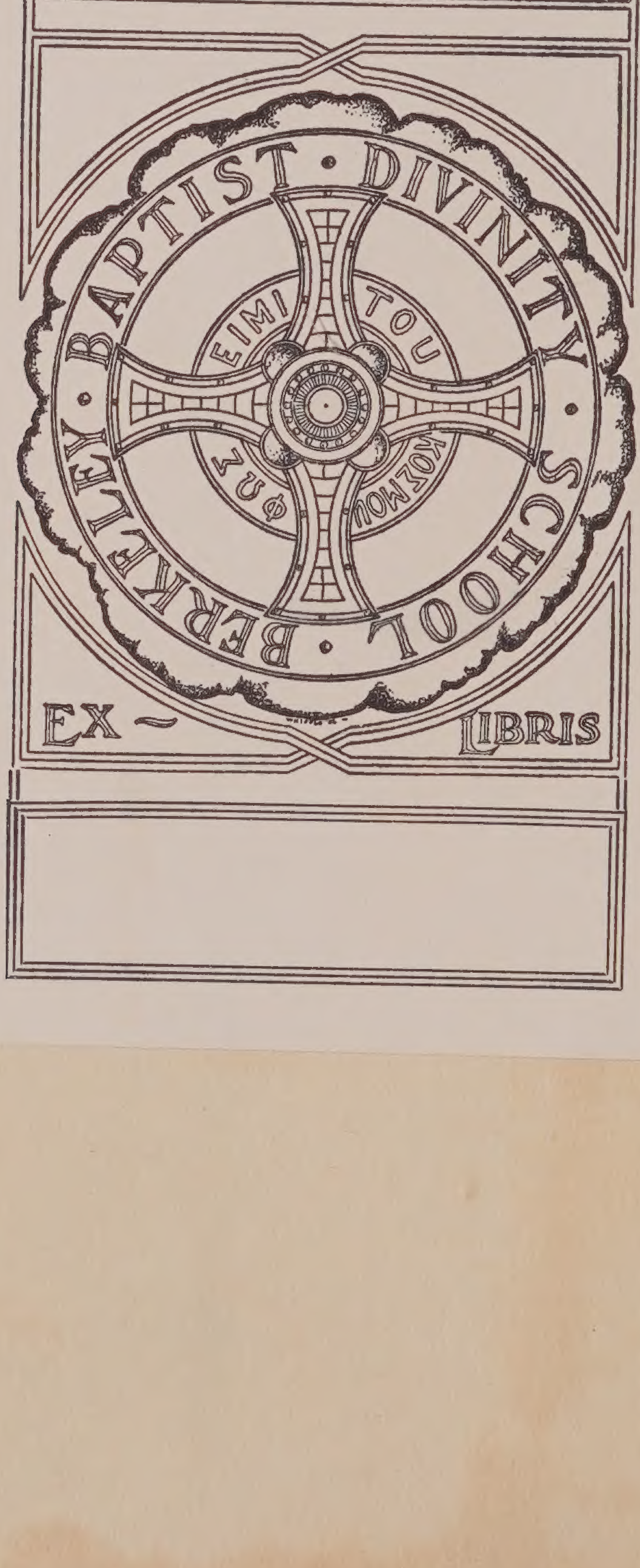
THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

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The aim of THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE is to preserve all that is worth preserving of the modern interpretation of the Bible. It is the thought rather than the expression that is retained, though the expression has not been rejected when it seemed worthy. So much, however, has been done in the way of condensing, re-arranging, re-writing, adding to, and illustrating, that the sources have not as a rule been given. But so far as these are published sermons, they will be found in the Index to Modern Sermons which accompanies each volume. THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE contains also much that is new, written by the Editor and others.

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST LUKE

The Wicked Husbandmen

Luke xx. 9.—'Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.'

Matt. xxi. 33.—'There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.'

No one can fail to see the connection and resemblance between Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard and this Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. The same great principle underlies them both. Similar language is employed by Jeremiah in more than one place, so that we can readily understand how intelligible it would all be to the hearers of Christ. Every one would know what the vineyard, with its hedge, wine-press, and tower signified, and who the vine-dressers were, and who the servants sent for the fruits. These phrases belonged to the established religious dialect of Israel as much as the words 'pastor,' 'flock,' 'Sion,' and so on, do to ours, so that they are used by us all almost without consciousness that we are speaking in figures. Thrust it from them, therefore, as they might, whether they assumed indifference, or were so blinded and deadened by their selfishness and malice that they only slowly realized that His words were directed against them, the chief priests and Pharisees, as well as the people who surrounded Jesus, could not but perceive His meaning. The conflict between them was reaching its crisis; the time for entreaty was all but past; it only remained sternly to warn those who were preparing the Cross for the greatest of all the messengers of God of their own judgment.

The chief priests and elders of the people came to Jesus as He was teaching, and asked, 'By what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?' They thus took up a position as if they were not only the representatives, but the guardians of the people; as if it were their duty to prevent the people from being misled and imposed upon. Jesus immediately proceeds to show what sort of guardians and guides these were. And then turning not only to them, but to the whole body of the people, He exposes the character and attitude of the nation generally, and especially of its rulers and representatives, with 'a sacred passion of prophetic indignation,' in words that must have seared like flame.

Let us look, then, at the picture presented in this parable, first of the Divine goodness and forbearance; secondly, of human presumption and rebellion; and lastly, of the inevitable doom.

1. *The Divine Goodness and Forbearance.*—'There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.' Must we not understand, as also implied in our Lord's words, the impassioned appeal of the prophet—'What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?' The vineyard was planted, furnished with a hedge for protection against wild beasts, and with a tower to serve as a look-out against robbers, and perhaps also for the vine-dressers to live in. Everything which care and thoughtfulness could provide was there. And yet he who had lavished care and thought, labour and expense, upon the vineyard was deprived of that return which he had a right to expect. Let us admit that in the sphere of everyday life this result was in both cases, if possible, at any rate exceptional. It would be seldom, indeed, that, after due skill had been exercised, and every precaution taken, the wild grapes should still appear instead of the cultivated fruit. Nature does not thus betray the trust reposed in her. More frequently, but still comparatively seldom, it might happen that those in charge of a vineyard denied the owner, and refused to carry out the contract, whatever its nature, into which they had entered with him. We may suppose that men would not often act, even in the East, as the husbandmen did in the story. Self-interest alone would prevent this. But in the higher sphere that which would be impossible or unlikely in the

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lower too often becomes the rule. There we come in contact with the mystery of the *human will*, round which all possible barriers may be erected, to which all possible inducements may be offered, and which may yet break through the one and despise the other, doing the very opposite of that which ought to be done, which it was designed to do, and which it was its true interest to have done. The field may respond to the culture of the husbandman, the servant may remain faithful to his master's interests, and may recognize that in so doing he is doing the best for himself, 'but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.'

As we remember what God had done for Israel, can we say that either by the prophet or the Saviour the picture is in the least overdrawn? Had not God's 'ways been made known unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel'? The Law was theirs to teach them righteousness, the sacrifices to bring them to a sense of sin, the prophets to warn them, the psalmists to comfort and encourage them, all the institutions and the whole history of their nation to train them to receive and rejoice in the Kingdom of God. Whatever outward influences could be brought to bear upon the human will, so as to incline it in the way of goodness and truth, were constantly employed. Israel at least could not say that if she failed it was from the want of privileges. God's goodness to her and His forbearance with her throughout the whole history of her apostasies and idolatries were beyond dispute. Israel remained without excuse.

And are the same goodness and long-suffering not clearly marked in our experience also? Have the privileges of Christian parentage, Christian education, and the influences of society and of the Church not been as a hedge defending us from many foes? In the nature and extent of our spiritual knowledge we go far beyond the people of the ancient covenant, for we are permitted to contemplate a salvation, not foreshadowed but perfected, to read the true meaning of the life and death of Christ. If we examine our individual lives, must we not bear testimony to God's mercy and patience with us?

Out of the deeps how often hath my cry
  Gone up to God on the wild wings of prayer!
  Even so often hath He deigned to hear;
So often hath He said—Thou shalt not die;
So often—Stand upon thy feet once more;
So often—Serve me better than before.

  But I, the river of my pain being past,
Slighted His succour Who had borne me through,
Daily deferring the sweet service due,
  Till seem'd that Mercy's self might scarce refrain
  Her patient hands from vengeance at the last.
But Thee, still seeking Thy reluctant Sheep
Mid thorny-tangled brakes that pierce Thee deep,
  Iron ingratitude repels in vain.[1]

2. *Man's Presumption and Rebellion.*—At the fruit season the householder did what was only reasonable and right—he sent his servants to receive the fruit of the vineyard. 'And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.' Since the fruit did not become ripe all at one time a series of servants was despatched, and as these became more earnest and insistent in their demands, the husbandmen proceeded to greater lengths. It is obvious that there is a gradual preparation for, a working up towards, the last final effort, when 'he sent his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.' Such is the image set before us of the obduracy, the blind infatuation, which characterize human guilt. The motives which seem most rational, which are recognized as of force in everyday life, fail of their effect. There is neither truth, nor mercy, nor reverence left. All loyalty is thrust out from hearts which can repay with conspiracy and violence the trust of a father sending his 'own son, his well-beloved,' as St Mark expresses it. There was not only no loyalty, there was even a great imprudence; for they presumed upon the forbearance that had been shown them. They thought that because they still escaped punishment the owner could not or would not strike, and so they foolishly measured their strength with his.

But how profoundly they misconceived the inevitable course and claims of justice; they

[1] P. S. Worsley.

had only exhausted the patience and goodwill of the owner of the vineyard, and filled up the measure of their guilt. It is the common failing of all privileged classes, corporations, guilds, and unions to think only of their rights, real or imaginary, and not of their duties. The religious leaders of Israel had used their great official position for their own glory, and insisted to the full on all their privileges; but they had forgotten, or failed to discharge aright, the indispensable duties attaching to their offices, which alone could justify their retention of them.[1]

Do not let us forget that a like responsibility rests upon ourselves to respond to the goodness and patience of God. We constantly witness the amazing power of the human soul to encase itself in evil and to resist the strongest motives, the most powerful appeals. Christ died; but men are indifferent to His sacrifice; they are indifferent to the claim which His self-denying love makes upon them. With mind and heart fixed on some fancied good, they pursue their way, heedless of the wrongdoing to which they are tempted and driven, heedless of the irretrievable ruin in which it will end.

3. *The Inevitable Doom.*—The Jews surrounding Jesus answered His question, 'What will he do unto those husbandmen?' 'He will miserably destroy those wicked men,' they replied, 'and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.' Nearly forty years later Jerusalem was besieged and taken by the Roman armies under Titus, and her children slain and carried away captive, and the gospel which the Jews refused was offered to the Gentiles.

¶ If there is any promise, if there is any warning, written on the page of history, it is the promise that the religious nation shall be strong, the warning that the irreligious nation will be weak. The Greek and the Roman are as signal examples of this law as the Jew. When did the Roman power begin to decline? Just when the national faith began to lose its hold on the Roman people. Augustus, sceptic as he was, knew well enough that, unless he could check the growing infidelity of his day and restore the forms of popular worship, Rome was doomed to decay. He made every effort to restore them, but the attempt had come too late; and though it took centuries to wear out that vast and complex organization, the Imperial City was already on the path of its downward career. But so it is everywhere and at all times. A nation cannot forsake Him Who has the words of eternal life, and prosper.[1]

How is it with us? Do we acknowledge the justice of God's claim to our love and service? Has He not the right to demand of us the fruit of faith and a good life? Has He not borne with our waywardness, and given us opportunities of repentance? Then let us beware lest the voice which now bids us to repent come to pronounce against us the doom of the impenitent. Our hope is in His mercy, for He who gave for us His own, His well-beloved Son, will He not with Him also freely give us all things?

[1] R. H. Charles, *The Adventure into the Unknown*, 181.

The Last Appeal

Luke xx. 13.—'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him.'

'It may be!' It is not a matter of assurance. A doubt breaks through the uncertain word. Men have rejected other ambassadors with contempt. Heavenly things have not inspired them, but disturbed them. They have been troublesome ghosts in the temple and in the market-place; they must be got rid of, and that quickly! So the Divine ambassadors were shamefully handled. Their blood was mingled with the dust, and their carcasses thrown to the dogs.

After the ambassadors, what next? 'My Son'! After the honoured and distinguished servants of the house have been beaten to death there is still the son of the house, the young Prince of Glory. 'I will send my beloved son.' After the Son there will be nobody else left to go! It was the supreme gift of infinite love. It may be that where the ambassador failed the Son would woo and win them. 'It may be!' Surely we may remove the trembling, negative word, and insert some word that is more radiant and confident. Surely we may change 'It may be' into 'It shall be!' No fearfulness shall accompany the Son of God on His journey. The spirit of outrage shall not

[1] S. A. Alexander, *The Mind of Christ*, 160.

meet Him on the road. The violence of men will be changed into homage. A new mood of gentleness will steal into their hearts, and it shall be as if the vineyard had become a temple where brutal passion has been transformed into reverence and adoring awe.

So 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, full of grace and truth.' And assuredly we needs must love the highest when we see it! For that is how the poet sings. The soul will awake when the Lover appears. The heart of love will answer the call of love. It shall be as in the mating-time, when bird calls unto bird, and two hearts which thrill in common song make a love-match, and begin to share a common life and home. 'I will send my beloved son.' Well, and what is the splendid issue of the sending? Nay, no splendour, but shame upon shame, sorrow piled upon sorrow, and grief upon grief. 'And he, bearing his cross, went forth unto a place called the place of a skull, where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.' So that is how they loved the highest when they saw it! 'Him have ye taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.'

There are two things that we may say about these recorded happenings, and they take the form of simple inference.

1. The first is this—a man is finally judged by what he does with Christ. When a man stands before Christ, it is not only the Saviour who is revealed, but also the one who looks upon Him. The central secret of his being begins to emerge, like some hidden life of the woods which in some way or other has been enticed into the light of the open fields. When we stand before Jesus Christ that moment tells the story of our souls.

It may be that we reject the Son of God with *scorn*.

¶ 'A friend of mine,' writes Dr Jowett, 'was some time ago sailing through the Mediterranean on a P. and O. liner. A number of passengers gathered in the smoke-room of the saloon one night after dinner. Among them was a millionaire whose name was written in every land. In some way or other, as the conversation drifted along, the name of Christ came in. It was somewhat of a stranger, and it was not altogether a welcome visitor in the intercourse. The millionaire immediately said, as he flicked the dust from his cigar: "Oh, I take no stock in Him!" My friend told me there was a fearful and most uncomfortable silence in the cabin. He said, "It felt like Judgment Day." Yes, indeed, it was Judgment Day, and the millionaire was being judged and exposed. The worthless quality of his innermost life was displayed in his own speech. The tawdriness of his soul was revealed as if the lid of a box had sprung open and something deadly and festering was seen within. "I take no stock in Him," he said, and in that judgment the value of his own spiritual stock was exhibited, and this is the vital inventory of his worth—"having everything, and yet possessing nothing."'

¶ 'Father!' cried Heine scornfully. 'We are of age, and do not need a Father's care.'

It may be that our attitude to Christ is not that of scorn and insulting rejection. It may be that we just treat the beloved Son of God with *indifference*. We may hear His name, but it awakes no interest. We would not cross the street to hear it again. Christ does not enter into our life. He is not a partner in our affairs. It is altogether to us as if He had never come into the world, and as though our streets had never known His footsteps or His voice. We may not say, 'I take no stock in Him,' and yet it may be deeply true that we do take no stock in Him. We do not invest in Him at all. We do not put anything into His enterprises. We do not mix His stock with our financial concerns.

Anybody who thinks for five minutes will begin to know what the stock of Jesus is, and in five minutes he will know how much of his personal treasure he has converted into it. But there are multitudes of men and women who do not give Him five minutes. The Son of God is come, the beloved Son of God, the Prince of Glory, but they treat Him with indifference. 'Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?' But they go on their way unheeding.

Not on some lone and lofty hill apart
Did Christ the Saviour render up His heart
For man upon the cross of love and woe;
But by the common road where to and fro
The passers went upon their daily ways,
And, pausing, pierced Him with indifferent gaze.

And thus again it is Judgment Day in their streets, and in their indifference their inmost being stands revealed.

2. But it may be that the beloved Son has won us. It may be that our souls have answered to His call as the lyre answers to the sweep of the fingers upon its strings. It may be that our sinfulness has felt the loosening power of His grace, as streams which are locked in ice feel the emancipating touch of the spring. It may be that our necessities have trooped out in the presence of His fullness, and we have leaped to the realization that our soul has found its vital springs. It may be that we have fallen at His feet with the adoring cry, 'My Lord and my God!'

'It may be that they will reverence my son.' Yes, and so we have! And in our faith and reverence we stand revealed as accepted in the Beloved. And lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come.

The Doom of Unteachableness

Luke xx. 16.—'When they heard it, they said, God forbid.'

The interest of this parable lies not so much in itself as in its immediate effect. When we have read it through, it is not the story that remains in our memory so much as the attitude of mind it evoked in those who listened to it. That 'God forbid' is the revelation of an inherent unteachableness in human nature.

It is not always easy to see facts in their true light, even when we want to see them. But when we do not want to see them, when our mood is attuned to the conviction that things will always remain and ought always to remain as they are, then it is impossible. The idle hands and the sluggish heart are unteachable things, and they are apt, which makes the case infinitely worse, to make a religion of their unteachableness, to regard him who would teach them as a blasphemer against their religion. That 'God forbid' was a sincere word, the only sincere word of which those men were capable. It needed that picture of the inexorable truth to rouse them into a momentary sincerity, and the only sincerity which was possible for them expressed itself in an indignant rejection of the truth. The prophetic word dashed itself in vain against something that was stronger than itself—the adamantine earnestness of an obstinate and unteachable mood. That is the tragic significance of this episode in our Lord's ministry.

1. Let us think of it. We never make a greater mistake than when we suppose that mere blindness to facts cannot be earnest. On the contrary there is no earnestness so terrible in its resistless strength as the earnestness of the soul that is blind to all facts save one. There is for it little of the conflict in which the soul with wide vision is always involved. Its strength lies latent, self-contained, against the hour when it has to meet the challenge of some accusing truth without. And it meets it all the more surely because it has escaped the inner conflict altogether. It looks out from the fortress of its single idea upon a world which is everywhere and at all times its possible enemy. It never questions itself only because it is always questioning and rejecting everything that is not itself. Who can fail to recognise the strength of such an attitude? It is the strength which for the most part governs the world. It is the idea which is sure of itself that works and always has wrought all the miracles of history. An idea is beginning to yield, its force is already sapped, when it begins to question its own credentials. The institution which has begun to see its own defects is already at the point of death. It is only while it believes in itself absolutely that it can continue to live. For that belief gives it the earnestness which is strength and the strength which is earnestness.

2. But when we have said this, there is still something greater in the world of God than the obstinate force of the single idea incarnate in an institution. There is the truth of fact against which no idea and no institution can stand for ever. Is the idea or the institution in accordance with the Divine fact which ultimately governs all things? If it is not, then it will disappear in spite of the blind and obstinate earnestness of its adherents as soon as the fact has clearly declared itself. And the Divine fact which ultimately governs the world, on which the life of every idea and every institution depends, is the law of spiritual cause and

effect. If an institution has lived for itself, if in order to do so more effectually it has beaten God's messengers and killed Him who was the rightful heir to all its goods, then God has already destroyed it, the doom has already gone forth against it, all the blind earnestness of those who will not see its fate cannot save it.

We wonder at the blindness of those to whom our Lord addressed His parable. We hold up astonished hands at their instinctive cry of 'God forbid.' But is not that cry our very own? Do not we too think of every established institution as something whose permanence is guaranteed by God Himself? Do we ever think of questioning its right to exist, of asking what it is doing or what it has done that it should continue a part of God's scheme of things? Once in some distant past it was deputed by God to do some useful and necessary work in His world. For a time it fulfilled its function, it justified its existence. Then becoming more sure of itself, its zeal slackened, or perhaps the circumstances which once made it useful had changed. Its opportunities of service had contracted. But meanwhile it was in possession. When God's messengers came to demand an account of its stewardship, to require the fruits of its ministry, it treated them as busybodies and intruders, it beat them forth with insult and derision. It did not even feel the enormity of its action, the wantonness of its self-sufficiency. The fatal taint of mere possession had passed upon its soul. It had persuaded itself and persuaded its loyal adherents of its necessity to God's scheme of things.

¶ There is a famous passage in Cicero in which he records that a prisoner having spent his life in a dark dungeon, and knowing only what light was from a small fissure in the rock, inferred that if the wall were removed the light would cease to exist because the fissure would be destroyed. Many religious people live in a similar dungeon, and draw the same inference. They think that if the walls they have built to safeguard the light were destroyed, truth itself would perish.[1]

Is not that the history of every human institution? Is not that the history of feudalism till the day of the great Revolution shattered it at a blow in France and sounded its knell throughout Europe? Is not that the history of all those forms and organizations of property which subsist among us to this present hour? The more doubtful their present value, the more evident their moral bankruptcy, the more we try to invest them with a religious sanction. When the voice of truth denounces their inadequacy and their failure, the heartlessness and the crime with which their lease of life have been or are being secured, our only answer is a most sincere indeed, but also a most blind and obstinate, 'God forbid.'

3. There is no institution which arouses so easily this kind of obstinate and unteachable loyalty as the religious institution, and there is none which suffers from it so much. There is something sublime about the attitude, but there is also something essentially blind and stupid. It is well to distinguish if we can between what makes it sublime and what makes it stupid. Now it is true that certain ideas and forces are of the very stuff of human life, that it cannot exist healthily, indeed that it cannot exist long at all, without them. And it is most certain that of all these essential ideas and forces religion is the most essential. And again, it is certain that religion can only exist permanently in an institution. But what is not certain at all, what indeed is demonstrably untrue both from the facts of history and from any worthy conception of the nature of God, is that God is irrevocably pledged to the permanence of any particular religious institution. Every such institution is for ever standing at the bar of God's assize, arraigned before His judgment-seat. The messengers of God are continually arriving to require of it an account, to challenge its loyalty to the great idea which God had in mind when He called it into being. And it is an evil day for it when it refuses that challenge, when the loyalty of its sons ceases to be a loyalty to God's idea, and comes instead to be an undiscriminating loyalty to itself, a blind belief that because God gave it its life He has guaranteed its life for ever.

It was that mood of obstinacy which destroyed, or rather superseded, the Jewish Church. And are we in a better case?

¶ We, too, can look back with pride and affection on a great inheritance, on a past which is eloquent to us, through religious monuments like our great Cathedrals, or the Book of Common Prayer, or in that tradition of civil and

[1] J. Burns.

religious liberty and pure family life to which Puritanism has contributed so much. Yet only the purblind can fail to see that, while we have been pondering on a mighty past, the present has been slipping away from us, and the Kingdom is passing away from the Churches, as of old it passed from the Jews, to 'a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.'

What, then, should be our attitude towards the Historic Church? The axe is laid at the root of the tree; the year is given to dig and to tend. There are many of the younger generation who think that the sentence of final condemnation has been already spoken. My own judgment is otherwise. I hope and believe that Jerusalem, even in this her hour, will recognize the things which belong to her peace, and that the Christian Church to-day, unlike the Jewish Church of old, may have the insight and the courage to face that constructive revolution—in theology, in forms of worship, in organization, in practical activity—through which alone it can realize its destiny in the uplifting of mankind.[1]

The Inexorable Christ

Luke xx. 18.—'Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.'

THERE is a sentence in Dr Paterson's book on the *Rule of Faith* which runs this way. 'The value of a religion depends on the truth and sufficiency of its idea of God.' Not only on the truth of it, but on the *sufficiency* of it as well. If we start with a little God, we shall have a little peddling religion, utterly insufficient to meet the better needs and wants of man. For the idea of God is the ground plan in religion. If the ground plan is cramped and meagre, the building erected upon it is bound to be cramped and meagre too. To make this Christian religion of ours, with its world-wide redemption, with its universal salvation even credible, we need a mighty conception of God. It is a vision of the Sovereign Lord we need.

1. We delight in these days to say, 'Gentle, gentle, gentle, is the God and Father'; we have almost forgotten that what cherubim and seraphim, with veiled faces, continually do cry is, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts.' There is a verse in a hymn in one of our Hymnals in which the writer says:

> Oh, how I fear Thee, living God,
> With deepest, tenderest fears;
> And worship Thee with trembling hope,
> And penitential tears.

That verse is almost foreign to our modern religious experience. God has become to many of us an easy-going, good-natured, indulgent parent who can be coaxed and cajoled by His children, and who can deny them nothing—*le bon Dieu* of the Frenchman.[1]

¶ We do not like the hymns in which the whirlwind sweeps and drives. We prefer the hymns that are just filled with honey. And so the 'sweet' hymns are the favourites, and the sweeter they are the more welcome they are to our palates. We have partially dropped the hymns which harrow and alarm, and which minister to our fear. Some of us have what we sometimes call a 'sweet Jesus.' We know Him only as the Speaker of gentle and condescending speech, and of tender, winsome invitation. We have not a Jesus before whom we frequently 'stand in awe.' We glide on in the religious life heedlessly, and at no moment do we stand appalled.[2]

¶ I can call my Father a brave man (ein Tapferer). Man's face he did not fear; God he always feared: his Reverence, I think, was considerably mixed with Fear. Yet not slavish Fear; rather Awe, as of unutterable Depths of Silence, through which flickered a trembling Hope.[3]

2. To some of us the formidableness of Christ and of Christianity will be a new idea. We are not accustomed to thinking of Christianity as formidable.

But listen to Jesus in the Parable of the Vineyard. According to that parable, the Master of the vineyard had let it to certain husbandmen to cultivate for him. When the time came for them to give him of the fruit of the vineyard, he sent his servants. But the men who held the vineyard reviled them, beat them, and sent them away empty. At length the Master of the vineyard sent his own son; and when they

[1] B. H. Streeter, in *The Spirit*, 370.

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of the Sovereignty*, 7.
[2] J. H. Jowett, *Thirsting for the Springs*, 131.
[3] Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, i. 10.

saw him coming, they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.' They did, therefore, kill him, but they did not gain their ends. They themselves at last were miserably cast out and destroyed. That is the parable, very plain, and very stern.

The men who listened to Jesus that day had no doubt as to what He meant, and neither need we. The ultimate reality in this world of ours, He taught, is God. All that we hold, we hold in trust for Him. To Him we owe the tribute of our lives. To us He sends His messengers, and to us He has sent the supreme representative of Himself in the person of Jesus. Men may rise against that challenge of God, as embodied in the presence of Jesus. They may try to repel it, to kill it, to fling it away; but that will not be the end. There is no escaping the ultimate spiritual authority. If any will not make God's purpose the foundation stone for all their living, then the stone becomes an avalanche grinding them to powder beneath its awful weight. That is a gigantic thing to claim. We may believe it or deny it; but no triviality of mood is left when once we have felt the staggering impact of all that it implies. That message of the relationship of God and man, which we call Christianity, speaks with commanding voice.

(1) In Jesus always there was *an assertion of power* which dismayed those who opposed Him and thrilled the men who loved Him. We can watch it in the beginning of His ministry, on that day, for example, when He went on a Sabbath day into the synagogue in His own town of Nazareth. If we turn to the Sermon on the Mount, see how the authority of Jesus lifts itself there, high and overshadowing, like some majestic mountain peak above the little summits of the utmost which men have said before. On one level He places the sayings of the great teachers of old, even of Moses himself, and above these in serene contrast He dares to proclaim a new and transcending gospel.

¶ Christ's sayings bear a stamp and seal of their own. As Deissmann puts it, they are seen to be not separate pearls threaded on one string, but flashes of one and the same diamond. The truth and its Author are inseparable. Never man spake like this Man. His words are so simple, so translucent, and yet so penetrating, so full of awful authority. He speaks with a tone and accent which are not of this world. His voice comes out of the bosom of the Father, and stirs the echoes of eternity in our spirits as we listen. To a Christian nothing sounds so conclusive and final as the plain command, the explicit promise of Jesus Christ. We understand that strong assurance with which the Apostle could quote: *He Himself hath said.* There is no certainty for us like the *ipse dixit* of our Redeemer.[1]

(2) When to His disciples He spoke the Parable of the Judgment, He said no less than this, that the destiny of men's souls would be determined by the way in which they recognized or failed to recognize the chance to love and serve His spirit in the least of men. All this is only the more impressive that we must link with it the thought of *the gentleness of Jesus.* The way in which He magnified His message is the more overwhelming because He never in our little human sense magnified Himself. He walked in intimacy of human sympathy with the least and poorest of those who needed Him. They said He was the Friend of sinners, and so He was. Yet it was the same Jesus, so loving, so self-forgetful, so nobly indifferent to any personal pride, who proclaimed in such absolute terms the life and death authority of that spirit which He represented. In what may be called the formidableness of His message there was no faintest tinge of that angered superiority which creeps like a stain into all our ordinary human judgments.

Tender as woman; manliness and meekness
In Him were so allied,
That they who judged Him by His strength or weakness
Saw but a single side.

The very gentlest of all human natures,
He joined to courage strong;
And love outreaching unto all God's creatures,
With steady hate of wrong.[2]

3. Unchangingly the power of Christianity is moving through the centuries. Indestructible in its spiritual energy as is that energy of our physical universe it pours itself into new channels, and shatters and overflows them if these through sin or through stupidity become

[1] T. H. Darlow, *At Home in the Bible*, 35.
[2] Whittier.

blockaded. It can come to life with infinite fruitfulness, but with great formidableness, too. To our own cost we may deny it, but we cannot *defy* it, when the last balances of reality are struck. *It* is not in danger, but we may be in danger. If we resist that which may be to us the power of life, it may become to us the silent but certain power of our death.

Let us take three phases of our present life and set them in its light.

(1) In the first place, there is the question of what is destined to happen to those classes in our society which at present are *the privileged*. It is only the truth to say that many of those who have most show the least sense of responsibility in its possession. It is not easy for those to whom everything comes without effort to keep simplicity of thought, humility of spirit, and a fine sense of responsible honour to obligations larger than themselves. Nor is it easy for those whose life is a daily practice of taking much and giving little to keep that enlargement of spirit which is the only gateway into the beautiful spaciousness of religion. The danger of our age is that those in whose keeping rests the possibility of leadership may prove unworthy of their chance. If that happens, then all the most certain forces of our universe will slowly gather for their overthrow. In the dim ages of our human evolution, the instinct within the race has been pushing forward constantly toward larger and finer experiments of life. And now that the race from those dim beginnings has risen to self-consciousness, the impulse to progress must be not only instinctive, but intelligent. Civilization can go forward only as those to whom much is given remember that of them shall much be required.

Life as a holy trust from God, the relationship of men as brethren through the consciousness of their Father's purpose in them all, the Kingdom of God as the high ideal to which all everyday work must be made to contribute—these are the living foundation stones on which our life can securely rest; and without these all our boasted strength and pride will ultimately go down into the dust.

(2) In the second place, there is that aspect of our life which has to do with the *relation of nations one to another*.

We live now in a larger and more complex world. It is a thrilling fact of our century that never have the words and ideals of Jesus shone upon the imaginations of men with a more revealing light than they do now. We have entered more deeply than our fathers into the meaning of the Kingdom of God. We have seen that the Gospel is not only an individual but also a social message, and that all our widest human relationships must be ordered according to the ideals of Jesus if Christianity is to be made real. Our knowledge is beginning to be sufficient. The question is as to whether we shall have the spiritual power to carry our knowledge into action. For religion will not be allowed without opposition to lay hold upon our national and international affairs. But neither we nor any other nation can defy the instinct of human solidarity which the spirit of Jesus has put into the hearts of men. When the rulers of the nations understand that in this universe of ours ideas are more powerful than things, that the desire of the human spirit for life and peace and joy which can bring men together is more important than the shrewd little advantages for which statesmen snatch and plunder in their diplomatic games, when they learn that the business of our leaders is to lift the peoples above the plane of the struggle of the brute into that organized and intelligent co-operation which befits the family of the sons of God—then our civilization will be built upon the living stone of the meaning of Jesus Christ; and if we reject or forget that foundation we do it at our mortal peril.

(3) Finally, the words of Jesus concern our *estimate of the Church*. Here surely, it ought to be plain that the spirit of Jesus must be the foundation of everything which we attempt to build. Yet as a matter of fact we know that often it is not. Instead of the spirit of Jesus, the Church is prone to substitute all sorts of other things—old dogmas concerning secondary matters, brittle prejudices left from the theological strife of other years, divisive sectarianism and ecclesiastical pride. The ideals of Jesus which the Church is supposed to express are the heart of her power when she is obedient to express them. But if the Church obstructs the spirit of Jesus, barricades it with our stupid literalisms, smothers it in our smug conventions, then the spirit will pass from the smitten body of the Church to find its free course in other ways.

¶ The ultimate social and political problem, whether we look at nations or industries or

classes or persons, is the remaking of men. Apart from this the world is in a parlous state. We have created monsters of mechanical power, we have harnessed the forces of Nature, but on the slightest provocation these monsters will devour us and these forces will overwhelm us. It all depends on the motive with which they are used. The same scientific capacity which deals death from the aeroplane discovers the microbe or the antitoxin, as the case may be, by which millions of lives are saved. It all depends on the temper, the motive, the ideal. Here is the acid test of our Church life. We deliberate, and quite rightly, about our liturgies and our rubrics and our measures, but the real question is, Are we exhibiting *God*? Are we remaking men? What we want, and what the Church should produce, are white men, men and women who in politics or industry, in society at large or in their own homes, will be themselves part and parcel of the exhibition of God, and will give the impression that the Church is no mere society of antiquaries, but a temple of the living God.[1]

'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.' Deeper than any questioning abides the eternal fact that upon the truth of life as it is in Jesus all our hopes for permanent achievement must be built. 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'[2]

The True Teacher

Luke xx. 21.—'Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly.'

The flattering words addressed to Jesus by His enemies, who were at that moment seeking to entrap Him, are a remarkable testimony to the natural affinity of the soul for truth, and the perception of its supreme value and authority, even though it should be resisted. They rightly describe the true teacher as he was seen in Christ.

1. The true teacher makes men feel that he is true, genuine, sincere, honest and straightforward. When sure that he knows he speaks with conviction, in accents of authority; when he does not know, he does not pretend to do so. He 'cares not for any one,' in the sense of either fearing man's disfavour, or courting his approbation. He 'regards not the person of men,' whether these are his immediate hearers, or those who occupy the seats of the mighty in Church or State; his sole concern is to declare what in his inmost soul he is convinced is 'the way of God,' whatever may be the consequences to himself. These features certainly all appear to the full in Christ, who 'taught with authority and not as the scribes,' who fearlessly opposed the false religious teaching and practices of His day, who sought no favour of priest or scribe, of king or governor, and who paid the price of His fearless truthfulness with His blood.

With His teaching He combined practical sympathy and helpfulness. He went about, not merely speaking, but doing good. He held Himself aloof from no one; He was 'the friend of publicans and sinners.' The outcast, the fallen, the moral as well as the physical leper found in Him a real, sympathetic Helper. The true teacher, whether we think of the Church or of the individual, must not teach in words only, but by practical manifestation of the truth. Only thus will the Truth make itself felt to be true.

¶ I was once honoured to be the colleague of one of the biggest souls in Scotland, a man of fascinating nature, big, human, humorous, of notable mental gifts, and of an arresting saintliness and strength of character—Alexander Cumming, of Forfar. As the tall, stooping, venerable figure moved about the streets, pausing to pet a bairn, or slipping up a close on yet another of the endless little kindnesses with which he crowded his happy days, faces everywhere lit up at the sight of him; and people, their voices suddenly grown softer, became kindlier in conversation when he hove in sight. So he passed to and fro, a kind of benediction to us all, as if God's own hand had been laid in tenderness upon us. I well remember how one of the chief men in the place, strong, self-reliant, and with many admirable qualities, but not one whom you would have thought could be easily touched, looked after him one day. 'Often I pull myself together with this thought,' he said, 'that if I threw away my life, I think that I could bear my punishment without whining, but, but'—and the man's voice sagged a little—'I could not face the pain in Mr Cumming's eyes.'[1]

[1] F. Theodore Woods, *Great Tasks and Inspirations*, 100.
[2] W. R. Bowie, *The Inescapable Christ*, 99.

[1] A. J. Gossip, *In Christ's Stead*, 79.

The effective teacher must always have a gospel to proclaim. He cannot place himself on the common level of man's life merely. He must have something to say from God, some Divine message to deliver, something that will attract, cheer and uplift, something that will appeal to that deepest in man which also becomes the highest. He must come as Jesus did with 'good tidings' from God.[1]

O Thou great Friend to all the sons of men,
Who once didst come in humblest guise below,
Sin to rebuke, to break the captive's chain,
And call Thy brethren forth from want and woe:

We look to Thee; Thy truth is still the light
Which guides the nations, groping on their way,
Stumbling and falling in disastrous night,
Yet hoping ever for the perfect day.

Yes! Thou art still the Life; Thou art the Way
The holiest know; Light, Life, and Way of heaven!
And they who dearest hope, and deepest pray,
Toil by the Light, Life, Way, which Thou hast given.

2. The gospel which Jesus preached was 'the Kingdom.' 'Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God.' God's purpose for man is a kingdom, 'a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.' Men ask, when Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of God, does He mean a society on earth or in a life beyond this? The proper answer is that Jesus means both, because there is no break in God's plan between the here and the hereafter. Only as He was teaching men who were living and working in the world the primary appeal of the message is the Kingdom of God as it is to be manifested here and now. So Jesus said, 'the Kingdom of God is at hand.'

Again men ask, does Jesus mean by the Kingdom of God a spirit of life in the heart of the individual or a tangible society expressing itself in definite ways? Once again the answer is that Jesus means both, because every society of men in the world is, first of all, a spirit which lives in the individual heart, and then an expression of that spirit in definite laws and customs which guide men's relationships with each other. The term 'Kingdom of God' is not vague in the sense that it is hard to grasp. It is big and broad and therefore hard to limit. If we seek its ultimate meaning, the Kingdom of God is the rule of God acknowledged in every human life and throughout all society, the will of God revealed in Jesus as the spirit and law of all life.

Now, at first sight there may seem to be something a little strange in the association between good tidings and a kingdom. There is something more immediately appealing in a religion which stresses the personal note. 'Glory for me' reaches a certain type of mind which remains unmoved before the idea that the greatest glory of all is to have one's life used, and perhaps one's death used, in the building up of some nobler society. Consecrated individual character is the deepest requirement of this as of every age, but we need some clearer notion of what character means in the terms of social life. Life is restless and unsettled to-day just at the point where my life touches the life of my fellow-man, where the class to which I belong is related to other classes, where my nation comes into contact with neighbour nations. The conditions also of the age in which we live have been forcing upon us with irresistible force the connection between good news to the individual and the Kingdom of God in this world. What have we been learning? That what men are thinking and feeling in remote corners of the earth may at any time knock at the doors of our own snug little securities. There is no safety for the individual until all human society is guided by the highest laws and obeys the same standard.

Something which happens in Berlin, or Paris, or New York, or Tokio to-day may upset all our individual plans and purposes for to-morrow. That is one of the lessons we have learnt.

¶ The mass of mankind had little enough to do with the larger affairs of the world of yesterday, but out of that world there arose a situation which has plunged millions of men into the agony of conflict and shadowed millions of homes. Men who had nothing to do with it have been called away from all they hold dear. Women who had nothing to do with it have seen the springs of their happiness dried up.

The supreme lesson is that every unit in the human family must concern themselves about these things in the world of to-morrow. Their

[1] W. L. Walker, *The True Christ*, 105.

security, to put the matter on no higher plane than that, demands that they shall.

To-day we are rediscovering the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is what humanity needs above everything else. But it is more than that. It is God's supreme purpose. It is as St Paul said, 'The mystery which has been hidden in the ages that in the fulness of time God might gather together in one all things in Christ.' That is the sure ground of our confidence. The very thing which we see as the deepest need of our age is God's supreme purpose for mankind and the meaning of Christ to the world. Let us take heart again, as we touch this mystery of God's will.[1]

Cæsar and God

Luke xx. 22, 25.—'Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no? And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's.'

By this time the hostility of the Pharisees to our Lord had become compact and even desperate. They had reached that point in their aversion when they were ready to attempt anything that could either trip or convict Jesus. By painful experience, however, they had discovered that He was a doughty opponent. On occasion He had actually turned their own guns against themselves and they had now grown cunningly cautious. After many galling repulses they felt that they must plot out some deep move. Simple but deep. The more guileless the better.

And so they came to Him with their question, 'Is it lawful for us, as good Jews, as God's people, owning allegiance to Him alone, is it lawful for us to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?'

If, to give a true solution, one must answer every question by 'Yes' or 'No,' then Jesus was in a cleft stick. He could not avoid the issue by an evasion; and no answer at all would have been worse than either 'Yes' or 'No.' If He had refused to answer, it would have been a proof of fear, and His silence would have condemned Him as a prophet and teacher with His audience. Silence or evasion would have been fatal.

But if He answered 'Yes' or 'No,' He was equally lost. If He said, 'We are a conquered people and are rightly due to give tribute to Cæsar,' He would have outraged all the holy, passionate, nationalistic dreams of the nation. Not a decent Jew would have listened to Him for another moment. Even among His own disciples there were keen Zealots, who hated Rome worse than the Southern Irish hated Cromwell, and with as much reason. If He said, 'We Jews may be forced at the point of the bayonet to pay tribute to Cæsar, but we deny that it is lawful,' there would have been a troop of soldiers at His humble lodging within an hour, and Pilate would have made short work of this political upstart. Rome might tolerate any diversity of religious opinion: but she was hard as steel in political questions.

In reply, Jesus gave what we may describe as the cleverest and the most perfect answer in all literature. 'Show me a penny.' And they brought Him a penny. 'Whose image and superscription hath it?' They answered, 'Cæsar's.' Jesus said: 'Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's.'

¶ Says Dr James Black: 'I told this story once to an American who did not know much about his New Testament. When I had finished, he turned to me and said, "Well now, can you beat it?"

'That is my own opinion. "Can you beat it?"'

In this answer Jesus defined His own attitude unmistakably to a great modern question, from two angles—negatively and positively.

1. Negatively, this is a plain announcement that He refused to be drawn into the vortex of political debate, or to side with any party. Why did He do this? Some people think that He should have given wise political guidance to His own needy age. If He had any light to give, why should He withhold it? Men surely need gracious leadership in the material things of life, as well as in the spiritual. He refused to do this for one or two serious reasons.

(1) However important and urgent they may seem to us, political questions are purely temporary. They pass in a few years into the limbo of mere dialectics, and are soon only of such historical interest as a mummy is. This question of tribute to Cæsar, for instance, is dead. The claim of the American States to secede—a great matter in its own day—is dead. Roman Catholic emancipation—how bitter that

[1] S. M. Berry, *The Crucible of Experience*, 275.

question was—is dead. Woman's suffrage—we remember its turmoil—is dead. In fact, all the questions we call great, great often because we are so near to them, die in their own age, and certainly die with their settlement. They are as temporary as our own darkened passions.

But Christ's message is timeless, not for one day but for all days. If He had pronounced on any big question that agitated His own day, however timely His word would have been, He would have ceased to be timeless. That part of His message would have died with the occasion that prompted it.

(2) All parties, just because they are parties, cling only to aspects of truth. But Jesus said, 'I am the truth.' He claimed to give something that is bigger than any party, that may be a light and an inspiration to purify all parties. If He had given political guidance, He would have been just as living or as dead as the issues on which He pronounced!

2. On the positive side, His answer suggests that He gave big living principles, not little passing policies, eternal principles of right and justice in which ephemeral policies may be framed. He was concerned with the saving doctrines of good life and conduct, by which all policies may be measured, and in which all policies may be inspired. He gave regulative views of God, of man, of worth, of truth, of love, of justice, to which all our political schemes should be brought as to a touchstone.

That is what He did here. In no sense did He evade the question. He answered it perhaps in the fullest measure in which the burning question of State and religion has ever been answered. On the one hand, He commanded all men, frankly and fully, to 'Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's.' What does that mean? Surely it means nothing less than this—that we give our full dues to the powers that be, fulfilling our duties to the State, to society, and to our fellow-citizens. We are members of the State, and we handle 'Cæsar's money.' That implies that we accept the privileges of State citizenship, State rights, State protection, State comfort, State amenities.

Now, if we accept great privileges, we should be as ready to accept great responsibilities. It is a mean thing to take all that the State offers, and refuse what the State needs. It is the meanest thing in the world, for instance, to stand amid all the great privileges of a stable and civilized nation, and yet cheat in our income tax! 'Render to Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's.' The very sweep and comprehensiveness of this charge cover all duties and all times.

'And to God, the things that be God's.' That is added as if its application regulated the message of the first sentence. It does. For our view of the State will ultimately depend on our view of God. If God's true service be put first, our service of the State will never suffer. The best citizens of the Fatherland are those who love the Father's land. For in God our conscience is sharpened, our sense of duty is deepened, and our regard for others becomes a love. If, first of all, and most of all, we seek to give God what is God's due—our worship and reverence and obedience—we shall never grudge what is due to our fellow-men or to the State in which we live.

> All we have is God's, and yet
> Cæsar challenges a debt;
> Nor hath God a thinner share
> Whatever Cæsar's payments are.
> All is God's; and yet 'tis true
> All we have is Cæsar's too.
> All is Cæsar's; and what odds,
> So long as Cæsar's self is God's?[1]

You will notice that Jesus gives no limiting details, but only a great principle to be interpreted by our growing conscience. By lifting all policies into the region of principle, He made His message to His own age as much a message to ours, a message that can never be exhausted until we reach 'perfection's sacred heights.'

Human Coins

Luke xx. 24.—'Whose image and superscription hath it.'

THE words of no Oriental Rabbi should be considered only in their surface interpretation; still less would it be possible thus to consider the words of One who spake as none other spake; One who was not a 'Teacher come from God,' but God come as a Teacher.

It is not possible that those who heard our Lord's question 'Whose image and superscrip-

[1] Crashaw.

tion hath it?' could have limited their understanding of its meaning to the surface plane. Their possession of the Oriental habit of mind would have led their thoughts beyond the letter. They knew that the special characteristic of this Teacher was, that 'without a parable spake he not unto them.' They knew that it was not the first time that He had used the allegory of the coin to indicate the human race. They were, moreover, thoroughly at home in the Hebrew Scriptures; and when the Lord asked, 'Whose is this image?' their minds would, almost automatically, have turned to the profound declaration in the Book of Genesis, 'So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him.'

The question then is an example of our Lord's thought-provoking method of teaching. It was a momentary lifting of the curtain that covers the mystery of man's being; it was an appeal to a Divine fact in man; it was a reiteration of His dogma, 'the kingdom of heaven is within you'; it was a reaffirmation of the fact that nothing can ever really change the central current of man's purpose, and regenerate man's nature, but the clear recognition of his dignity, his responsibility, his potentiality, as possessed by God, loved by God, linked with God, nay, one with God; that if there had been brought to Jesus some utterly degraded specimen of the human race, as they brought Him that silver didrachma, and the question were asked, 'Whose is the image and superscription' on this man? there could have been but one reply—'In the image of God, created he him'; and that which God hath once impressed with His image, though that image may be defaced and overlaid, can never be obliterated.

There is a threefold lesson arising out of our Lord's question.

1. The *theological lesson* from the human coin stamped with the Divine image is one of the utmost importance as a stimulus to optimism. It is the twin-truth of the Eternal humanity in God, and the Eternal divinity in man; that man, however buried and stifled now in the corruptible body, is, in his inmost self, indestructible, and inseparably linked to the Father of Spirits. For the purpose of Divine self-manifestation, man is as necessary to God as God is to man. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork'; but only man—mental, moral man—can declare the nature of God and show the character of God. We, then, are personal spirits, who have proceeded from God into matter, and 'the image and superscription' of the Creative Sovereign Power, whence we came, remains for ever indelibly impressed upon us. Inasmuch as humanity is the chosen vehicle of the self-unfolding of God, it will, through much initial imperfection, and through many changes, struggle upwards and onwards in development, until, at last, it shall be found complete in Him, and His purpose be completely fulfilled.

Madest Thou man in Thine own image, Lord?
How then has man defaced that work of Thine,
Until on that which Thy hand made so fair,
Thou lookest vainly for the marks divine?

Selfish and wayward, we have turned from
Thee,
Albeit for Thyself Thou madest us—
Have fixed our thoughts and hopes on things
below,
And lost the likeness to our Maker thus.

Yet Thou hast loved us with a love so strong—
Thou hast desired us, though we left Thy side,
That—changed, and marred, and sin-stained, as
we are—
Apart from us Thou art not satisfied.

And Thou hast brought us to Thy feet again:
O now, at last, fulfil in us Thy plan!
Undone, and helpless, at Thy feet we pray,
Remake us, by our perfect fellow-man.[1]

2. There follows, from this consideration, what we may call *the personal lesson*. This irresistible evolution of the race will not be impersonal, it will not be wholesale; it will be one by one. 'With God,' said De Tocqueville, 'each one counts for one.' Each one of us is a responsible, moral being, and a responsible moral being, perfected, purified, tested and found faithful, is not machine-made; he must be grown. In other words, he must be exposed to what, with our present imperfect knowledge, we call evil. Temptation is an inexorable law of moral growth. And just here comes in the explanation, from the analogy of the coin, of our startling dual nature. That this educative operation

[1] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 74.

of the will of the Father may be effected, man is made a composite being. He possesses an inferior animal nature; in other words, there is a reverse side to the coin.

¶ Did you ever examine closely the reverse side of a sovereign? Close to the date you will see the minute capital letters 'B.P.' Not one person in a thousand has ever seen these initials; they have not looked for them. They are the initials of Benedetto Pistrucchi, the talented chief engraver to the Mint, in the reign of George III., the designer of the coin which Ruskin said was the most beautiful coin in Europe—the English sovereign.

Carry on the analogy, always remembering that analogies are only meant to give play to thought. Who is the 'Benedetto Pistrucchi' who has stamped the reverse of every human coin with the device of our common humanity, the conditions of our flesh and blood existence? Do you say, 'The devil'? Oh no, surely not the devil. St Paul is careful to point out, in Romans viii., that it is not the devil. He says man was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by God. The same die that stamped the King's image stamped the reverse of the coin. No, the initials on the reverse side of the human coin are the initials of human heredity.

It is all part of the plan of Nature and there is nothing to be ashamed of. But when we are discouraged by the striving of the animal nature and utterly disgusted with ourselves we must turn over the coin; turn away our attention from the 'Benedetto Pistrucchi' side, and think intensely into the other side. Say, 'But I am the Lord's; His image is stamped on me. His life is in me. His eternal purpose is my perfection. My true self is His Divine Spirit.' And such thought becomes creative; it restores the equilibrium; it helps the atonement—the at-one-ment of the two sides of the coin, of the human and the Divine, making, as the Apostle says, 'of the twain one new man.'

So much for ourselves. But now in our judgments of others. Here again, remember, we cannot see both sides of the coin at once, and therefore our judgments are literally one-sided. Our heroes are not deserving of all the worship we give them. Our villains are not as black as we paint them: they live before us, and before all men, with the reverse side up. But we never honestly try to turn over a human coin of this description without finding the King's image—often much defaced and covered with accretions, but always there.

Why do I dare love all mankind?
'Tis not because each face, each form
  Is comely, for it is not so;
Nor is it that each soul is warm
  With any Godlike glow.
Yet there's no one to whom's not given
Some little lineament of heaven,
Some partial symbol, at the least, in sign
Of what should be, if it is not, within,
Reminding of the death of sin
  And life of the Divine.

There was a time full well I know,
When I had not yet seen you so;
  Time was, when few seem'd fair;
But now, as through the streets I go,
There seems no face so shapeless, no
  Forlorn, but that there's something there
That, like the heavens, doth declare
The glory of the great All-fair;
And so mine own each one I call;
And so I dare to love you all.[1]

3. There remains *the practical lesson*. A recognition of the truth underlying the question, 'Whose is this image and superscription?' would prove to be the golden key which would unlock all the great social problems of the age. If it were recognized that man bears God's image it would break down the prejudices which now divide the race. These prejudices are too many to enumerate. But think of the colour prejudice, which clings so tenaciously to white races—positively, in one great continent, amounting to a serious national peril.

¶ We must begin with the children. In them we have a clean slate. It is a striking fact, as Mr Oldham has reminded us, that young children seldom show any sign of race or colour prejudice. These things are added later mainly through contact with their elders. The same writer quotes the remark of a Southern white man, which is significant in this connection: 'I have got nothing against niggers. I was fourteen years old before I knew I was better than a nigger.' It is indeed a matter of simple experience that in a Christian atmosphere racial differences find their true level. I saw this myself in that most famous educational institu-

[1] H. S. Sutton, *A Preacher's Soliloquy and Sermon*.

tion in the ancient and beautiful town of Kandy. In that place Trinity College includes a great variety of races—Cingalese, Tamils, Burghers, Eurasians, Europeans, various races from India and Burma, and indeed Africa. After a ten days' association with the place I could discover no race feeling, but only the kind of atmosphere which would be the envy of an English public school.[1]

Think, again, of international prejudice—the insular prejudice of the British born, teaching him to despise all that is not English, to look upon all foreigners as inferior. Again, think of class prejudice, separating English people more widely than caste separates in India. The universality of the Divine impress should surely teach us to care more for others. Our Lord once drew a vivid and significant picture of a search for a lost coin, where the same inwardness of interpretation underlay the analogy. He rather implied that it was our fault, the fault of the Church, that the coin was lost. He suggested that we should light a candle, and stir up the dust from the unswept floor of our distorted social conditions, and actively, aggressively search for His God-stamped human coins till we found them.

That is the true credential for the higher life, for 'heaven is not heaven to one alone. Save thou one soul, and thou mayest save thine own.'

Christianity and Politics

Luke xx. 25.—'Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

There have always been, and perhaps always will be, many people who seem incapable of interpreting Christianity in the light of public duty. Religion is for them an idyll, a dream, a fragrance, and their temper is to keep as far as possible from the loud contentions of human life. They are quietists, they are mystics. But Christianity is not perfectly grasped by us until we see that it has more than a private spiritual significance and that it demands contact with a larger life than the merely personal.

When Christ came to Jerusalem He was met with a political question of the utmost importance, 'Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar?' If Christ replied that it was not lawful, He at one proclaimed Himself a patriot, but also a revolutionary: if He declared tribute lawful, He threw away all the hopes that were fixed on Him as a political Messiah. In the one case He challenged Cæsar, in the other His own nation. This is the dilemma; and Christ replies with simplicity and subtlety, 'Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's.'

Now what does that reply really mean? Does it not define the relation of Christianity to politics? There are at least two perfectly plain and positive elements in it; let us look at them.

The first great positive element is that Christ recognizes duty to the State as such; men are to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. The State represents that organized order without which society could not hold together for a single day. Man is not an individual only, but a social unit. It is not permitted to man to arrange his life as he will apart from society. If all men did this, or if any considerable body of men did this, the result would be general anarchy. Taxation, for example, cannot be made optional. A government does certain things for the whole community, and it is only fair that the whole community should pay. That is Christ's first statement, and it is repeated with even stronger emphasis by St Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained by God.' Both in Christ's words and in Paul's there is one perfectly clear thought expressed; that the government or the State is a Divine institution; that the Christian religion does not release us from these obligations; that even a faulty State or government is better than none, as order even of the most rudimentary kind is better than anarchy.

But it will be said, what is that but a miserable counsel of opportunism? Carry out a doctrine such as this to its logical conclusion, and it would mean an immoral acquiescence in the most debased despotism that ever cursed the earth. It is practically the doctrine of the Divine right of kings, that stupid insult to the conscience and intellect of a free people, against which England rose long ago. We are to pay our taxes, and ask no questions, simply because a government represents order. Is this all that

[1] F. Theodore Woods, *Great Tasks and Inspirations*, 25.

the application of the Christian spirit to politics means ?

It is not all. There is a second positive element in Christ's saying ; we are to render not only to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, but to God the things that are God's. Christ joins civic duty with moral and religious duty, and it is here that we discover the real subtlety of a reply which appears at first sight almost childishly simple. In what way does the second clause of Christ's saying modify the first, and illumine it, and make the whole speech a summary of what Christianity is in relation to politics ?

1. The man who renders to God the things that are His, unconsciously introduces into politics a higher meaning. There is a mean way of regarding politics and a high way ; the mean way is to see in them nothing but human institutions ; the high way is to see them as the vehicles of a Divine force, by which the world is divinely governed. It is only the man who has from his heart and conscience rendered unto God the things that are His, who will ever regard politics in a thoroughly high and noble spirit. And hence the need for religious men in political life, men who present, as Lord Rosebery put it, 'that most formidable and terrible of all combinations, the practical mystic,' combining all the energy of the man of action with close communion with the supernatural.

The higher politics are only reached by way of religion. The utter meanness and contempt to which our political debates have sunk of late are due to one cause only, the lack of firm religious faith among our politicians. How seldom do we see broad eternal principles emerging from the flood of talk, principles that make an irresistible appeal to the universal conscience. We hear much of Cæsar and the things that belong to Cæsar ; how little of God and the things that belong to God ! But Christ's word remains, and when the things belonging to God drop out of politics, nothing can save them from corruption. The religiously indifferent politician can manage to attain a little human platform from which he sees the things that belong to Cæsar well enough ; but those great heights of thought from which the Divine element working in human things is seen are forever inaccessible to him ; they are reached only by the man who guides his life in the fear and love of God.

2. If we do indeed give to God the things that are His, that very action must imply in the long run a political life in the Christian. For what are the things God demands of us ? Not prayer alone, or worship, or sedulous spiritual culture ; but justice, humanity, integrity, rectitude, and these not in our private capacity alone, but as citizens. A man may be ever so just and upright in his own private capacity ; but if he is indifferent to the cause of public and general justice, he is really unjust. A man may be the most humane of men in his private relations, but if he have no care for the great causes of humanity among his fellow-men, then he is really inhumane. To care for the things of God really and deeply soon sets us thinking about the things of Cæsar. To see God is to see our fellow-men with a truer and more sympathetic eye, and so it is impossible for the true Christian to be indifferent to the political conditions of his time.

¶ Mr Lloyd George in a recent address spoke of three of Christ's fundamental doctrines—equality, the rights of the individual, and the brotherhood of man.

'The doctrine of equality,' he said, 'does not mean that we are all equal. Nothing can make us equal. If we were all equal we should have a very dull world. No, we cannot have equality, but what we can have is an equal chance.

'Then there is the brotherhood of man. That means that one man is to be just to another. It also destroys war, for it is fratricide for a man to kill his brother. That doctrine if properly carried out would destroy slums, because it is not right that a man's brother should live in the squalor, filth and poison of the slums. There are eight millions of souls in London, thousands of them living under conditions which are a disgrace to the greatest city under the sun.

'These doctrines of Christ, preached two thousand years ago, have taken a long time to work out. Nevertheless, if the Christian churches do their duty and not only preach these doctrines but see to it that they are put into force and are applied to the physical, moral and spiritual conditions of mankind, then we shall have equality, the rights of man and the brotherhood of the race.'

3. As it is true that the higher politics are impossible without religion, so it is true that politics rightly pursued should develop the

religious spirit. Do not let us talk of the hardening, corrupting effect of politics. They only corrupt the corrupt, and are little only to the little-minded.

¶ Abraham Lincoln, in common with the wisest men of his time and country, went into the blackness of that great civil struggle with a very vague perception of its real meanings. It was one of the things belonging to Cæsar, a question of utilitarian politics, but it soon proved itself to be one of the things belonging to God too. He went into the struggle without any defined religious faith. But slowly, as he went further and deeper into the great gloom, before his awe-struck eyes the things of God were unveiled. He tells us he must needs seek help of God, there was no one else who could help him. He sees the war springing not out of mean and trivial causes as many a journalist supposed; no, it was God's war, God demanding the things that were His. And when at last the end comes, the great lifting of the cloud, there is but one word upon his lips, 'Let us pray'; and he and all his comrades bow before God, and give Him thanks amid their tears. And that is an example of how politics rightly pursued develop the religious spirit.

4. Christ's method is really the only true method by which we can remedy the wrongs that too often are covered by Cæsarism. If we give God all that belongs to Him, we shall find before long that we cannot give Cæsar all that he claims. We shall pay our tax, but that is a small matter unworthy of consideration. But suppose Cæsar demands the conscience, we shall then say, 'No, that is God's, I cannot give it.' And so these very Christians to whom Paul wrote did respect the power; they paid their taxes; they fought as soldiers; they behaved as good citizens; but when it came to dropping a grain of incense on the altar fires of Jove, that they would not do. They made the great refusal of life at the price of principle; and by that act they inaugurated the kingdom of a spiritual liberty. Seeking no power they became all-powerful; and the secret of that tremendous triumph which in three short centuries replaced paganism by Christianity was that they did the two things Christ told them to do; they gave Cæsar the things due to him, they also gave to God the things that were God's.

The politics of a nation are strictly regulated by the character of a nation. Our politics will not rise above the general level of national character any more than water will rise above its own level. Purer politics mean purer men; nobler politics mean nobler hearts; and from whence are we to look for the inspiration of these better things, unless it be in the Church of Christ, and among Christians? Tennyson links all hopes of true political reform and progress with Christ when he sings:

> Ring in the valiant man and free,
> The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
> Ring out the darkness of the land,
> Ring in the Christ that is to be.

The Living Dead

Luke xx. 36.—'The children of the resurrection.'

1. It is somewhat remarkable that Jesus said so little about immortality. He did not ignore the subject, but neither did He attempt to throw much new light upon it. Yet He assumed the immortality of the soul, and with it the certainty of blessedness and of retribution. This assumption underlay all His teaching, and every now and then became an explicit utterance, such as the sentence, 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' One chief sanction of His moral exhortations and appeals was the thought that man is constituted for a larger and more glorious life beyond the grave. 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' No part of the teaching of Jesus is explicable on the supposition that all ends at the tomb. In every sentence of the Beatitudes, in every word of comfort to the sorrowful and the poor, there is implied the assurance of a larger, fuller life beyond the grave, a life conditioned in some degree by what we are and what we do in the brief span of earthly existence.[1]

¶ A mother has two kisses for her child; one, a daybreak kiss, wherewith she draws aside the curtains of the soul; and one a good-night kiss, sometimes given in the dark. And so hath the Eternal His two loves: the love in the light, which now encircles us; and the dark love, on which our souls lean back to sleep. Those who

[1] R. J. Campbell, *A Faith for To-day*, 331.

have felt God's daylight kiss can trust Him for it in the dark. For thee to die will only be to lie back in the Everlasting Arms.[1]

2. The hope of immortality is a subject of perennial interest to mankind, although we do not speak about it as much as our fathers were wont to do. Realizing how little we know or can know, we have revolted from many of the dogmatic statements which were common enough a generation or two ago. It has seemed to us that silence upon so great a subject is often wiser than words. It expresses reverence before great mysteries.

Yet to-day there is no question which raises a keener interest and enquiry than the idea of immortality. And to most men immortality means the continuance of individuality after the crisis of death. The ordinary man of to-day means this when he speaks of immortality. It is simply continuity of individual experience, thought, feeling, memory, desire, affection.

¶ With the hope of meeting in a brighter scene of existence, I look upon death as the most inestimable privilege of man. Oh God, if we are not to meet there, if those who are gone from us are but a mockery and lost in everlasting nothingness, wherefore hast Thou created us all ? [2]

Alas, for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees !
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play !
Who hath not learnt, in hours of faith,
  The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever lord of Death,
  And love can never lose its own !

3. Let us get down to the foundations of our faith in immortality and discover what it is in the life of man which refuses to look upon death as the end of all, and which regards it not as an insurmountable barrier but as an open gateway.

Under the guidance of certain minds we have been led to look with hope towards the possibility of actual communication between those who have left this world and those who remain here. Is the doctrine of individual persistence after death to be established by proof then instead of being left in the region of faith ? What attitude in fact are we to take up to spiritualism ? An attitude either of ridicule or of hard and fast denial is to be deplored. That is far removed from the genuine spirit of enquiry, and we have to remember that every pioneer of new knowledge has had to pass through the stage when his conclusions were subjected to ridicule or blank denial.

But it is a good sign that there has been no premature rejoicing in the claim that has been made that persistence after death is amenable to actual proof. In truth, Christian thought has been a little shy of the new claim. On the whole it has stood aloof from it. That is a sign of strength, not of weakness. It means that belief is not so slender that it grasps at every support which is offered to it.

As Emerson says, ' I am a better believer, and all serious souls are better believers in immortality than we can give grounds for.' It is the drowning man who clutches at the straw, and if the Church had adopted the new standpoint in a hurry it would merit the accusation that it had lost confidence in the old basis of belief.

The Church will never accept with joy the results of the new method until the marks of greatness are upon the messages which are claimed to have been made. Her faith in immortality is based upon what is great in life here on earth, upon the elements of the Divine in the human soul, upon man's faith and devotion and sacrifice, and above all, upon the God who is the source from whence these things come. She will not exchange that high faith for a proof which would leave nothing in our hands save a few trifling messages. Let the new method be free to pursue its course without harsh or intolerant words, but, in the meantime, let us confess that our confidence is placed elsewhere. We believe in immortality because of what has been discovered in the life of man and what has been revealed to us of the nature of God, and both together in the life and work of Christ.

¶ I remember discussing the question from a rather different point of view with Sir Oliver Lodge himself. We had been talking of the new methods of approach to the subject, and some of their results, and at the close I ventured to ask the question as to what effects would follow if the truth of the soul's life after death was generally accepted as proved. I do not think we arrived at any clear or certain con-

[1] J. Rendel Harris.

[2] Carlyle.

viction. You will realize the uncertainty yourself if you put the question in a personal form and ask how far you would act differently if you knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that after death you would continue to live. I am inclined to say that the question in that form is not one that appeals to the Christian man. He does not regulate his conduct by the niceties of the consequences which follow. He has seen a vision which his heart tells him he must follow, whether death be the end or not. If it be death, then in the presence of His Lord, like Thomas of old, he says, 'Let me go to die with him.' In a word, the Christian man does not find the basis of his conduct here in a belief in immortality; his belief in immortality grows out of the spirit of his life here.[1]

Immortality is the unhesitating demand of the moral nature of man. The belief grows naturally out of a life greatly conceived and nobly lived. The great life is conscious of its incompleteness. In riding above the common level new heights are clear to the sight and it claims the opportunity to fulfil itself by scaling them. Live in a low atmosphere with no thought or purpose to lift the soul out of itself and immortality, if it does not seem unbelievable, will seem undesirable. But live in the eternal here, and without fret or strain the boundaries of life swell out beyond the seeming barrier of death to take in a wider field. When Swinburne wrote:

> That no life lives for ever,
> That dead men rise up never,
> That even the weariest river
> Winds somewhere safe to sea,

he had been living in the close and depressing air of vanities. Death then seemed a haven of rest.

But not in such accents does the noble soul speak. One touch of greatness rids the soul of that world weariness, gives to it an inexhaustible vitality in which death seems repellent and life is the prize to be won. It is the fruit of great living, and the heroic soul will, as Browning wrote:

> Greet the unseen with a cheer.

This is the atmosphere in which the Christian faith in immortality is born. Christ revealed in human life that which the heart of man could not conceive as the victim of death. Even as there are deeds which, as we say, shall never die, so the lives out of which they spring cannot be thought of as lying under the power of death.

This should be our attitude in the forward look towards the mysteries of the beyond. Think not that immortal life is an even flow which will carry the soul on its bosom without strain or effort. Cherish no hopes of an indefinite continuance of life apart from the soul's own choice. The heaven in front of us is not eternal rest or idleness or pleasure. It is the opportunity for life and work and service, larger because free from many of the limitations of the world. Lay up for yourselves treasures there by the soul's choice of the highest here, by resolution and courage and unceasing effort.

Immortality

Luke xx. 37, 38.—'Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.'

One of the commonest contrasts in our thought is that between God's eternity and our brief span of life. Before Him the generations rise and fall and pass away. Sometimes the pathos of life's shortness is brought home to us with keen impressiveness as we look out on Nature around us, on its apparent stability in contrast with our frailty. The stars that we gaze on by night shone upon Jacob as he slept at Bethel. And yet, brief as man's earthly term is compared with theirs, he feels himself unspeakably greater than they. The stars are unconscious of their Maker; are merely part of His possessions. But man is not God's possession, he is God's child, made in His image to know Him, to enter into fellowship with Him, to return Him love for love. Few as his years are, he has thoughts that wander through eternity; he has in him a spirit which aspires after that which is beyond space and time; he can freely and intelligently co-operate with God in carrying out the Divine purpose.

It is this fundamental idea of what God is, or may be, to man that our Lord dwells upon in declaring human immortality against the

[1] S. M. Berry, *The Crucible of Experience*, 58.

sceptical contentions of the Sadducees. One of their chief doctrines was the denial of the Resurrection, which practically meant with them the denial of any future life. The story of the woman who had had seven husbands and survived them all had perhaps no existence except in their imagination; but as a parable it served to set forth in an extreme form the difficulty which they thought would attach to the notion of a continuous life in the Hereafter. Christ begins by pointing out that this objection is a fallacy; for in the future life the conditions are altered. In the world to come life proceeds on other lines than those of earthly experience—in it all things are become new; there is neither marriage nor death. But Christ having thus shown the misconception of the Hereafter that underlay the Sadducees' question, proceeds at once to the fundamental question whether there is any Future Life for man or not. Now, one of the Sadducees' reasons for denying a future life was that it was not taught in the five books ascribed to Moses: the Books of the Law. Our Lord in His reply, selecting a passage from Exodus, affirms that the words in which God spake to Moses 'I am the God of Abraham,' were a proof that Abraham still lived.

If one comes to me and says, 'I was your father's friend,' it may be either that my father is dead, or that there has been a change in the affection of the person speaking; but if he comes to me and says, 'I am your father's friend,' he implies two things: the existence of my father and the permanence of his own love for him; and the one just as much as the other. So when God says, not 'I was the God of Abraham,' but 'I am,' etc., He is not merely asserting His own existence and providence, but the continued life of the faithful of ancient days. And so the 'I Am' of God proclaims the 'I am' of the creature; the soul looks down the sloping years and says of its prospect, 'God is, and I am.' And Christ's answer to the Sadducees comes to this: 'You are inconsistent in denying the future life; you ought first to have denied the being of God.'[1]

Dead things in the material universe may have a creator, possessor, or ruler; only living and rational beings can have a God, One who makes a covenant with them, pledges His love to them, and educates them for communion with Himself. A fellowship such as that into which God called the patriarchs held within it the pledge of its own perpetuity.

Such is the argument of Jesus. And His argument is one of universal application. It is directed not only to the Sadducees, but to all doubting hearts in all the ages.

There are two aspects of this fellowship of man with God which attest its permanence.

1. Consider what is involved in this fact that man can love God and that it is God who has taught man to love Him. Take the case of Abraham. In the midst of surrounding idolaters, he had heard the call of God; he obeyed the command to go forth from his country and kindred to a land dimly described as the land of promise. He kept nothing back—not even his only son; and all in order that he might enjoy the sense of the Divine fellowship. Can we imagine, then, that when he was laid to rest in the cave of Machpelah God had no more need of his service? To suppose that the Eternal called him to do His work on earth and accepted of his devotion and then left the tomb to cover for ever the heart that had endured so much and trusted in Him so long—surely that were unworthy of Him! God is the Lord of death. He has all power, and His years have no end. To summon any human heart to forsake friends and comforts for His sake, to face trial and disappointment, and then to say, 'You too must die, even as the beasts of the field which eat and are satisfied'—if we could think this of God, could we call Him Father? Remember that our truest thought of Him is drawn from the best in ourselves; that it is Christ Himself who teaches us to interpret the Divine by the highest human. 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' It is, therefore, our duty to make bold application of this principle, and say, 'God is from everlasting, and will He not make His faithful child a partaker in His immortality?'

¶ In one of the most exquisite of all his dialogues Plato handles the theme of immortality. He discusses it and argues for it, and builds up lofty reasons for its certainty. But Jesus never discusses immortality—for Him it is a thing to be assumed—He cannot conceive of any other destiny for a being so infinitely dear to God. If man were a trifle in the eyes

[1] J. Rendel Harris, *Memoranda Sacra*, 5.

of heaven, then like a trifle he might cease to be. But if man is infinitely dear to God, then it is impossible that he should perish. Girt with a love so mighty in its tenderness, able to look up and say *My Father*, it was simply impossible for Christ to think that the coffin and the grave should be the end. If one of your little children lay a-dying, and looked up at you and smiled, and said *My Father*, would you not barter everything you had for the power to bring that child to life again? And God in heaven *always* has that power, and He is our Father with a father's heart, and we, even the sorriest of us all, have never ceased at our worst to be His children. It is that filial relationship, in Christ's eyes, which makes the thought of extinction quite impossible.[1]

There are those who have represented this longing of the human soul for continuance, this protest against death, as if it were a selfish feeling. It is said that we are to do good in order to be rewarded, and to avoid evil lest we should be punished. In this doctrine there is nothing which appeals to the nobler feelings of man. It is a direct appeal to that part of our being which is the meanest, as if that were the part which could most readily accept religion. It connects us to God by bonds of self-interest, as a servant to a patron, not by bonds of love, as a child to a father.

¶ Stevenson's doctrine of travel for travel's sake, with its accompanying disparagement of success, goes with an extreme objection to the hope of reward as an incentive to labour. 'The soul of piety was killed long ago by that idea of reward,' he affirms. 'Nor is happiness, whether eternal or temporal, the reward that mankind seeks. Happinesses are but his way-side campings; his soul is in the journey.'[2] His general attitude to the whole question is summed up in one memorable sentence of his *Memories and Portraits*: 'To believe in immortality is one thing, but it is first needful to believe in life.'

If that were really the Christian doctrine it might well be criticized. But it is not so—it has sprung from a false representation of Christianity. Christianity asks us to do good, not for the sake of abstract good, but for the sake of being like to God—the personal goodness. That is not a selfish doctrine, nor does it lead to selfishness. It urges us to avoid evil, lest we should become unlike God. That is not a selfish motive. It takes us out of self, and makes our life consist in living in God, and, because He lives in all the race, in living through Him in the interests and lives of all our brother-men. That is not a selfish doctrine. Its reward is not a selfish reward; it is the reward of being made unselfish, because made like to God. Nor does Christianity appeal to fear of punishment, but to the feeling of love. It does not say menacingly, 'Thou shalt not kill, or steal, or be an idolater'; it says, 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself.'[1]

No, the best qualities in man are of the nature of the Infinite; and to share them is to share His Eternal life. It was in the old age of his fruitful life that Tennyson wrote:—

The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just:
Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they
crumble into dust!

This was the thought that was in his mind when he said to Bishop Lightfoot, 'The cardinal part of Christianity is the Life after Death.' He did not mean that this belief stood first in order, but that it was bound up indissolubly with the Christian view of God and of man.

2. Immortality is not only involved in man's love to God; it is also involved in God's own love to man. The deepest desire in the heart of the Father is for companionship. It was for this reason, indeed, that He made man in His own image: He wished to give love and to receive it. And so, even when man sinned, He devised means for his recovery. Now, the most Divine delight which we have is the delight in guiding and helping others; and those whom we have helped and borne with become dearer to us every year by the very fact that we have given them so much of ourselves. Think, then, of those whom God has trained for Himself. Reason protests against the idea that He would thus prepare at such cost an instrument for His service, and then discard it when it was readiest for use.

The relation between God and the soul that trusts Him is far deeper than that which subsists between friend and friend upon earth. For the closest friends exist apart, and are, so far,

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Weaving of Glory*, 332.
[2] J. Kelman, *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 163.

[1] Stopford A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, 165.

independent of one another; but the soul draws all its strength from God. If it lives at all, it lives in Him. God and the soul are not merely related, they are one. Its humility, its penitence, its hope, are His gifts, nay, rather are Himself. In Christ, above all, as God manifest in flesh, we have proclaimed to us the union of the Divine and the Human. Was it not this sense of oneness with the Divine which assured Paul that neither things present nor things to come could separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

¶ It is said that when Thoreau lay on his death-bed a Calvinistic friend called to make inquiry regarding his soul. 'Henry,' he said anxiously, 'have you made your peace with God?' 'John,' replied the dying naturalist in a whisper, 'I didn't know that God and I had quarrelled!'

If God has thus created us for His immortality, how imperative it is that we should realize now that to enter into this fellowship with God is the one supreme meaning and purpose of this earthly life. Death, said our Lord, could not blot out Abraham, because God was his God. Yes, but the Patriarch had chosen Him to be so, had claimed to be His servant through self-sacrifice and obedience to His will. And we, too, have to choose God for ours. If we grow in love to God and in loyalty to Him by daily self-denials, then it matters not when or where the summons to depart shall sound, for it can usher us into no world where we shall not find ourselves at home in Him who is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

The Life Beyond

Luke xx. 38.—'He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.'

'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.' Those who have gone on are not really dead—the word ought to be banished from the Christian vocabulary. And the world of their new activities is not a void and empty region. It is a land peopled with our friends; all of them alive, thinking, willing and loving; all busy with glorious services and high activities. They have taken with them all their powers and faculties, those personalities for the making of which this lower world exists. They keep, as Jesus did, the qualities that distinguished them down here.

¶ The following letter to Canon Barry embodies Robertson Nicoll's ultimate belief:

What I gathered from Dante and others was mainly the doctrine of Browning, that our personalities are distinct in the next world, and that a pure and holy love between individuals in this life is the creation of God and will live on through the next. Browning's deep teaching of the eternity of love seems the most reasonable and the most consoling of creeds, and, so far as I can make out, it is entirely in sympathy with the Catholic doctrine. But of course the widening of the sphere makes room for new loves, and there are so many lives almost loveless, or quite loveless, in this world, that they must find in God not only His love but the love of fellow-beings like themselves—the redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.[1]

1. There is not an argument on *the difficulties of belief in the hereafter* that really touches the essential point. Not the argument from the relation of mental activities to physical structure, for everything that can be said about that is equally compatible with the theory that the brain does not create the mind but is only the instrument on which for a time the mind is playing.

Not the argument from appearances, which for most men is the greatest difficulty. It looks so like an end. But 'things are not what they seem.' To the uninstructed, modern theories of the nature of matter sound more impossible than the most grotesque of fairy tales. To reduce this seeming gross and palpable substance to 'something of the tenuity of thought itself'; to tell me that what I call solid is made so by incredible velocity of movement! that seems to mock my common sense. Yet the fact is even so. Modern science has marched to all its victories with this strange device emblazoned on its banners: 'By faith we *dis*believe the evidence of our senses.' To judge by the testimony of the senses is to negative every important advance that science has made. Of physical science no less than of spiritual is it true that a man must walk, not by sight, but by insight. It is by correction of sense impressions by intelligence, that we win all our knowledge.

And as for the fine sentiments by which men

[1] T. H. Darlow, *W. Robertson Nicoll*, 276.

and women (great souls, for example, like John Morley or George Eliot) have comforted themselves, that what the individual man has done goes to enrich the race although he has perished, what do these amount to? For this earth is a time structure and will some day come to an end; the race will have perished then with the individuals. There will be nothing to show that it has ever been. The whole age-long process that has built up personalities, thought and love and heroism and sacrifice, what will it amount to? a gleam of fireworks, a momentary flame, and then the unending night. And if it be said that the value of it all has passed into the Infinite Spirit, that the Unseen Universe is the better and richer for it, one has to ask, What Unseen Universe? For what has been built at infinite cost is personality, and if that goes what is left?

It is sheer confusion of thought to compare man's life and God's to the waves that lose their individuality in the sea. Personal qualities are not transferable. They cannot be handed over like physical entities: they are achievements in the soul, and perish with it. And if it be said that Justice endures and is eternal, the obvious answer is, 'Justice to what and to whom?' Justice has no meaning apart from personality—you must be just to something or to somebody. If you evacuate existence of living personalities, of Jesus Christ and all He stands for, you make the Infinite Spirit a nullity. All that is left—if even that—is the thought of a lone Spirit you call God who first makes a house for living beings, plays with them for a few millions of years, snuffs them out, generation after generation, and ends by burning the house He built for them. The thing is incredible as a theory of life and existence! Every instinct rebels against it, has always and in all ages rebelled against it, and never more than now. The higher man rises the surer he grows that life means something, that something is eternally gained for the universe by the struggle. And that cannot be unless personality endures.

¶ In his classic on *Immortality*, Professor A. W. Momerie points out that, 'in the process of evolution, we find distinct evidences of a meaning, a purpose, a plan, of what Professor Fiske has well called *a dramatic tendency*.' And, a little further on, he says again that 'the more thoroughly we comprehend the process of evolution, the more fully convinced shall we be that it is throughout a rational process, and that therefore it *cannot* come to an irrational conclusion, cannot end in an anti-climax. The more thoroughly we comprehend the process of evolution, the more profoundly shall we feel that to deny the immortality of the soul is to rob the whole process of its meaning. To suppose that what has been evolved at such cost will suddenly collapse is to convert the mighty drama of creation into an imbecile and drivelling farce. Immortality is the only possible climax to that creative work which has been, in all its myriad stages, so wonderful, so divine.' Darwin himself said as much. He felt, and felt acutely, that the evolution that led to extinction was a blind alley. 'Believing as I do,' he wrote, 'that man in the distant future will be a far more perfect creature than he now is, it is an intolerable thought that he is doomed to complete annihilation after such long-continued progress. To those who fully admit the immortality of the human soul, the destruction of our world will not appear so dreadful.'[1]

2. Let us consider *the inadequacy of our thought about the new life.*—A phrase from Maeterlinck's play, 'The Blue Bird,' always comes up to memory. The children, under the guidance of the fairy in the search for happiness, are able to talk with their old grandparents who had passed away from the earth. And one of the children says wonderingly to the old folk, 'So you are not dead?' 'Dead,' they answer, 'what does that mean?' 'Oh, it means that you are no longer alive!' To which the reply comes, 'How silly! The living are so stupid when they think of The Others.'

Maeterlinck is right. We *are* often so stupid when we think of them. How they must smile at us, and also at their own former thoughts about it all.

The 'eternal Sabbath day,' for instance. The picture of the high-backed pew and the eternal psalm-singing. Certainly no one symbol would be adequate. Worship—when the heart is awake—is a glorious thing. The Sabbath is a noble boon to our tired, toiling humanity. Music is one of the most natural symbols of ecstasy. But an existence made up of any one of them alone would be 'appallingly tedious,' and one can sympathise with the writer who says, 'To beings constituted as we are, the monotony

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Wisps of Wildfire*, 70.

of singing psalms would be as great an affliction as the pains of hell, and might even be pleasantly interrupted by them.'

Such ways of conceiving the future are entirely unworthy. To think of it as unending rest may be excusable as the utterance of a mood, as when the over-worked washerwoman said exultantly, 'I'm going to do nothin' for ever and ever.' But doing nothing would be even worse than perpetual psalm-singing.

¶ The notion that ardent, loving, eager spirits should be required to spend eternity in a sort of lazy contentment, forbidden to stir a finger for love and truth and right, is surely an insupportable one! What would be the joy of heaven to a soul full of energy and love, condemned to such luxurious apathy, forced to drowse through the ages in epicurean ease? If heaven has any meaning at all, it must satisfy our best and most active inspirations; and a paradise of utter and eternal indolence would be purgatory or hell to all noble natures.[1]

3. We come back to *the words of Jesus*, so quiet, so sure, and falling on the perturbed spirit like soft music, like sunlight, like healing, like melodies of home and love and rest. 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.' God is not the God of the dead but of the living.

¶ You remember that other scene in Maeterlinck's 'Blue Bird' when the two children go to a churchyard at midnight with that eerie feeling natural at such an hour and such a place. 'Where are the dead?' they whisper tremblingly. Suddenly a peal of thunder terrifies them out of their senses, and a mist seems lifted up as a curtain from the ground, and lo! the tombstones are gone and in their places are seen flowers of radiant whiteness. And the dawn begins to break. 'Where are the dead?' And the boy shouts back to his sister, whose trembling hand he holds—'There are no dead.'

It is that same God who made little children, with their insatiable curiosity and their merry hearts, who through His glorious Son said of these same little children, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.' From that same God came *this* various world with its beauty and glory, and it is surely not an unreasonable deduction from what we have seen that the new life will not be inferior to this in its possibilities of joyous activity, the happiness of powers and faculties in noblest exercise.

Say not the boy is dead, but rather say
He's but a little farther on the way,
Impatient sooner to behold the view—
At the next turning you may see it too.
Say he's a child again, early to bed,
On night's soft pillow fain to lay his head.
Say he is off to track the mountain stream,
And lingers by the side in boyish dream.
Say by immortal waters now at rest,
He clasps a thousand memories to his breast.
Say to his wondering quests wise angels, smiling,
Tell the true story of the world's beguiling.
Say on heroic task his soul is thrilling,
Where noble dream hath noble deeds fulfilling.
Say that he feasts with comrades tried and true,
But in his heart the banquet waits for you.
Say in the Presence, at a gentle word
He shows the wound-marks to his wounded Lord.
Say never he is dead, but rather say,
He's but a little farther on the way.[1]

The Widow and Her Two Mites

Luke xxi. 1-4.—'And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.'

Sometimes in the heart of rugged Alpine scenery an unexpected patch of green comes into view, showing fresh against the iron-grey of the precipices, the gleaming armour of snow, and the lofty peaks where storms gather. It soothes the eye and the heart to see it, not that it is fresher, greener than many a loved valley at home, but because of finding it there—a little garden in the midst of giant hardness.

Some such feeling takes us as we read this incident among the dismal records of the Passion Week. A week of priestly frowns and malice, of weakness and treachery, of injustice and studied cruelty—with this inexpressibly tender scene in the heart of it! It is so unconscious, so unadorned; a widow suddenly appearing out of the thin, cold mist of poverty, stealing

[1] A. C. Benson, *Joyous Gard*, 150.

[1] C. Allan, *The New World*, 127.

like a shadow shrinkingly across the Temple floor, and as suddenly disappearing in the same thin mist.

Jesus *beheld how the people cast money into the treasury*—not simply or chiefly how much, but with what betrayal of the heart's secret. Was it atonement for some misdeed? was it in advertisement of the pride of charity? was it in sincere devoutness? was it a careless form, a duty done without any moral profit accruing? 'He beheld *how*.' There were, we are told, thirteen boxes, trumpet-shaped, placed along the colonnades surrounding the women's court. The people came to one or another of these offertories, and cast in their offering. 'And many that were rich cast in much.' Jesus could watch the crowd pass to and fro along the colonnades; He could see the rich give well. They have given 'much'; who can give 'more'? It is quite possible that, in their hearts, they asked the very question; and from their hearts a comfortable answer came back. 'He beheld how'; and He still beholds; for He sits over against the treasury in every church of His.

Then from the shadow of the colonnades stole this lonely widow, having fought her dismal battle on the last margin of poverty, and won. It was all about two mites; should she give them, or keep them to herself? If she gave them, the Temple would be scarcely any richer, while she would be immeasurably poorer. That she hesitated, we may well conceive; the hesitation increased the value of the gift. 'Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing?' asked the king; and all kingly souls have asked the same question. And this King's daughter had looked upon her two mites, and wrestled and prayed; and she brought them back from the Throne of Grace, to give them willingly to God's house and service. And the One who sat over against the treasury saw not only the two mites and the blank left behind them, but saw also the sore struggle in which they had been won for God.

Two mites, two drops, yet all her house and land,
Falls from a steady heart, though trembling hand:
The other's wanton wealth foams high and brave;
The other cast away, she only gave.[1]

[1] Crashaw.

They were two: could she not divide equally between herself and God? The law, it seems, drew a line at two mites; no offering below that was permissible. But that does not answer our question. Why be so careful of the law? We read of two, in clearer knowledge of the truth than this widow, covering a retained portion with a lie; and Ananias and Sapphira were not the first in Jerusalem to try that art! Had she the farthing in one piece it might have been different; but while there are two pieces, there is always room for a double heart. It is not in money only that we are tempted to halve with God. Our talents, our time, our love, our conscience—let us keep half, and God take the other!

I beheld Him
Bleeding on the accursèd tree:
Heard Him pray, 'Forgive them, Father!'—
And my wistful heart said faintly,
'Some of self and some of Thee!'

'*Two mites . . . make a farthing.*'—Is that merely the Evangelist's explanation, or is he quoting Christ? It would have been like Him to give the equation, for no one reckons accurately the value of human love as He. We so often forget that the littles, taken together, make much. Only a prayer to-day, and a prayer to-morrow—so we speak or think. But they are more to Him who always sees a farthing in two mites. What of a mother's hundred little cares in bringing up her children for Christ? One by one, what are they? Ah, but together—think!—three, five, ten lives of beauty and service! The world has no column for the farthing, let alone the mite. But God writes in His 'book of remembrance' a cup of cold water even.

'*He called unto him his disciples.*'—Why not have called her also? His 'well done' would have transfigured her whole life. Why should He, the unselfish one, be so reticent of His praise? There is nothing we abuse more readily than praise. We spoil some of the noblest deeds through premature applause. Christ values the deed, and the soul that shines through it—values them too highly to spoil them by praising too soon. He keeps His 'well done' till we are fit to hear it. Who can tell the self-restraint of His sympathy? He is wise, hushing the whispers of heaven lest they

reach our ears too soon. Let her return into the shadow of her lonely life and win her victories in the strength of her own soul; some morning He will say—'I saw it!' And she will only bow her head lower, in adoring wonder. The soldier must come home for his medal; the worker must wait till evening for his wages. What He gains now is a sense of peace within, a feeling of victory over self.

Day by day His tender mercy,
Healing, helping, full, and free,
Sweet and strong, and ah! so patient,
Brought me lower, while I whispered,
'Less of self, and more of Thee!'

She goes home, all unconscious of what has happened, of what He says about her to His disciples. Still less does she know anything of how she has cheered His bereaved heart! He, too, treads this week His lonely way: He takes to Calvary 'all his living.' Judas will betray Him, Peter forsake and deny Him; the rich, which gave much, will not come to His aid; the priests, which received much, will be able to afford thirty pieces this very week to buy Him for death. No one but an angel will travel far to cheer Him; no one near will give a shoulder to help Him to bear His cross. But two women redeemed that week from unutterable squalor: one has anointed His body for the burying, the other has encouraged His soul for the travail that will save a world. The little sound of the two mites will follow Him through the Judgment Hall, and the mocking crowd, to the Hill. She 'did cast in all that she had.' He, too, gave all that He had, even all His living!

This is God's way of differentiating between the *much* and the *more*. The rich, if they saw her at all, gave her gift no second thought: why should they? What treasurer would? But God counts in the heart—adds it or subtracts it. The world must go on, in its own way, auditing its ledgers as well as it can: and the Church, too, often no wiser than the world. But let both beware of imagining that this is the final audit. 'Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.'

The Law of Giving

Luke xxi. 1-4.—'And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.'

Somewhere at the entrance of the Temple, or near it, stood the Treasury, where the faithful laid their offerings for the poor and for the worship of God. All the standers-by could see those who gave alms. Many who were idle and curious watched the rich men who ostentatiously, to be seen of men, came to let their right hand know what their left hand gave. Many among the rich had nobler thoughts, but these gave quietly their offerings; and Christ loved them as He loved the widow. But this day as, standing apart with His disciples, He watched the stream of almsgivers, and saw in the conscious faces of the rich their desire to be known of men, He turned away weary and sad of ostentation. At last a poor widow came, quietly slipping through the crowd, pain in her heart, but finding healing for that pain in giving; having nothing but a farthing, and giving that *all*. And Christ, looking on her, threw the whole meaning of the woman's act into words which in their poetic paradox reached so infinite a truth, that they have never been forgotten. Their meaning is our subject.

1. *The greatest gifts are valueless without pure motives.*—Valueless in God's eyes, for we can offer Him nothing of that kind which He has not got. All the beasts of the forest are His, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills. But if you offered love, would He refuse it? It is *that* God cares for. The wealth of the whole world, could you lay it at His feet, would not make Him happier. But give a cup of cold water to the wanderer, because you love, and God's day is more joyful.

But such gifts are not only negatively valueless. They are hateful to God. The giver gives to be seen and praised of men. He thinks he is doing good because the world praises it. So he has the sense of being good without goodness, and the belief that he is loving without love. That is dreadful, because it will take almost a miracle to open his eyes. To be

certain that we are right and to be wrong is sure shipwreck; the soul is like a ship whose compass, without the captain's knowledge, has varied; the only value he gets from his compass is that it leads him to the rocks.

Then he gets a habit of valuing goodness by the measure of his gifts. And gifts can be measured and must be limited. 'I fast twice in the week,' said the Pharisee. 'I give tithes of all that I possess.' What is the certain result? It is that goodness and love, which are infinite and immeasurable, are made finite and measurable to him. And then, of course, the ideal is no more, and aspiration dies; goodness becomes limited, and the soul narrows to a nut-shell. Life instantly loses all its beauty, all its charm. When love, the immeasurable, is measured, all things become mean.

Not only are gifts of this kind valueless to God and to those who give them; they are also valueless to the receiver. For, given for pride's sake, or for vanity, or without love, or because the world expects them to be given, they do not awaken love, but impose an obligation: they do not kindle gratitude, but torment the receiver inwardly, because he hates to be ungrateful, and yet is, and knows he is, ungrateful. And the more that is given in this way and the greater the gift, the more is the obligation felt, the heavier it is, and the more it is resented.

¶ It is *love* that converts a gift into a *grace*. It is love that makes it a blessing to the *recipient*. You may give a shilling to a beggar in such a fashion as you might fling a bone to a dog—that while it ministers to his physical necessities it may wound his soul. On the other hand, you may give the smallest copper coin with such real sympathy that while it does not go far to minister to his bodily wants, it brings healing to his soul. You remember what Lowell says in His 'Vision of Sir Launfal':

> Not what we give, but what we share,
> For the gift without the giver is bare;
> Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
> Himself, his hungering neighbour, and Me.[1]

2. *The smallest gifts are worthy when the motives are pure.*—Were this not true, how little we could do; but being true, how much more we can do than we think!

Did we love more, we should not think about it at all; but give unconsciously, as the violet gives its scent, and the clouds their colour, to the world. We want to see results; we desire to have so much gratitude; and when, having given, we see no proofs of the gift being of value, we draw in the horns of our giving. 'It is no use,' we say, 'I can give nothing worth giving'; and so we console ourselves for giving no more. The widow never asked herself of what use was her farthing, or whom it would profit. She gave because her whole heart was full. And when one gives in that way, everything is of value: of value to God, who delights in love.

> Over against the Treasury Christ sat:
> Sadly He watched the throng, which came
> And from abundant store, superfluous gold
> Therein of duty cast: their hearts were cold,
> Untouched by love's pure flame.
>
> But she, who gave from out her meagre store,
> Abundant love: real treasure brought
> To Christ, Whose love is evermore the same,
> And seeks for love in those who serve His Name,
> Yea! from each one has sought.

This giving is of value, too, to the receiver. It is just because there are people who, like this poor woman, give all they have without thought that the world is so much more happy than we fancy it ought to be when we think of all its sorrow.

It is not only money one thinks of as the gift which we throw into the treasury of the world (though money is made radiant by being stamped with love), not money, but those gifts of the soul which anyone can give who does not think of self in giving them. The smallest of them is of the greatest worth. You pass a man in sorrow, for a moment in life, and press his hand with a sudden impulse of pity. How little you have expended, but how much has been received—a world of comfort! A child runs to meet you with its flowers, its heart thrilling, eager for a word. You bend to kiss it, and your smile repeats the pleasure of your heart. How little! No, it is unforgetable; the child remembers it for years.

3. *It is the heart, the motives, that fix the character of acts.*—This is the essence of Christ's morality. What we are within makes the act

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Greatest of These*, 51.

good or bad, true or false, loving or selfish. That was the root of moral and religious teaching, according to Christ; and, laid down in the imperative, necessary, absolute manner in which He laid it down, without one single exception, or one single gloss, it revolutionized morality. Make the heart right, and all the rest of morality will follow as a matter of course.

Therefore, of course, in this matter of giving, whether of wealth, or love, or sympathy, or help, or of the uses of our good and clever qualities, it is not the material part that God regards, that earns His smile. How fair and beautiful it is to think that it is otherwise. If giving were measured by the standards of earthly value, the poor would not have the joy of giving, nor the weak. The poor often take their gifts out of their own comforts; take their care of the sick out of their rest; nourish the orphan at their own loss, and feel the pressure of their love, not as a daily burden, but as a daily grace. Blessed are the poor, said Christ, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven—the kingdom of love. But the heart equalizes, and in spite of the difficulties which riches impose on life, there are wealthy men who are also rich in love; who, by untiring beauty of sacrifice, do truly cast in all they have, not by reckless giving, but by thoughtful distribution.

Yet, however done, by poor or rich, and by whatever means, by giving of money or giving of sympathy, nothing is any good which is not done from the heart. That is the fact. No outside work profits, unless the inner life prompts it. No giving, no sacrifice is of any beauty or any use without love. 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' But, if we give a farthing in the widow's spirit, the profit is great indeed.

4. *It makes men full of thanksgiving to God.*—The right kind of giving, as we have seen, makes God happy. It also makes men thankful. It kindles so much joy and peace, and both are so Divine, that the giver knows he has God in his heart, and breaks into thanksgiving. A loving life is a thankful life.

And to those to whom such gifts are given the gifts restore hope and faith in man and God. They make the poor, and the sorrowful, and the lonely feel that God cares for them, because men care for them. The wretched are given, not only help, but a Father and a Brother.

¶ George Moore felt that it was not enough to give money and give it lavishly. 'I believe,' he said, in addressing a great public meeting at Aldersgate Street, 'I believe that mere money, unless it be given for the joy of Jesus, is as filthy rags in the sight of God.' He therefore felt it his duty to give in such a way that those for whose benefit it was designed were made aware of the love that prompted it. He was not content to post cheques to treasurers. In spite of the protests of his friends, who thought it undignified for a rich city merchant to mingle with the raggedness and filth of the slums, he went fearlessly and familiarly among the thieves, tramps, and vagrants who herded in London's squalor. 'I feel,' he explained, 'that nothing can reach to the depth of human misery, or heal such sorrow, but the love of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who yearned over such people with infinite pity and gave His life for His lost sheep.'[1]

The Persecuted

Luke xxi. 12.—'They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you.'

1. *Is there persecution to-day?*—This was a very vital word for the times when it was spoken. The lives of the disciples were spent in a perfect maelstrom of trouble—brought on themselves through their loyalty to Christ.

If we are frank with ourselves we shall admit that persecution does not come to us to-day. This fact ought to give us furiously to think. Are we not missing here something vital in the experience of Christ, and missing it because something vital is wanting in our loyalty to Him? One thing is clear: Christ expected that loyal discipleship would get people into trouble.

Of course it might be objected that we are living in days when the Spirit of Christ has so far conquered the world as to make persecution a thing of the past; that the world has learned to tolerate contrary opinions: that we have advanced to a greater trust in the power of truth, if not to a larger charity towards opponents.

[1] F. W. Boreham, *A Casket of Cameos*, 15.

It may also be said that a good many of the persecutions of history were needlessly aggravated; that some of the martyrs were bigots of obtuse temper, using language that might provoke their foes. Do not let us forget the phrase 'for my sake.' There are Christian people who are disliked, not for their Christianity, but for the want of it; not because they are right, but because they are loveless or tactless. They ask for trouble by a pugnacious temper, or a rude manner, or a bitter tongue. It is not their goodness which hurts; it is their pride and their hardness: these prevent that goodness winning a way for Christ. Their Christianity has not penetrated deeply enough to thaw their own heart; their influence is not a breath of warm life from the land of sunshine, but a blast from an icefield.

¶ 'Even while we read with tears,' writes Dean Church, 'and with a thrill of awe and joy the *Acta Martyrum*, can we help wishing sometimes that things had been different; that sometimes there had been more self-restraint, less defiance, more command over the overwrought and over-strained heart, more quietness and calm in the eye of the storm, amid the provoking of all men?'[1]

There is a saying in Russia, 'Blessed is he who can escape, and yet chooses to take the punishment the world would give him.' We are not to avoid the way of the Cross, or we shall miss the closest walk with God. Yet this religion of 'suffering' does not mean the love of suffering for its own sake, but the religion which does not attempt to avoid it when it meets us in the path of duty. There is a misguided enthusiasm, morbidly choosing a sorrowful destiny, which needs to be corrected by healthier views of life.

'Every one is not called upon to be a martyr for truth,' said F. W. Robertson. 'It is perfectly true that wherever there is a great soul pouring out its utterances to the world, there will be a Calvary. But before we pour out our utterances we should be quite sure that we are great souls, that the truth is one important enough to suffer for, and that the persons we speak to are worth the illumination.' Respect for these three rules would certainly check a misguided sense of duty. If we are not great souls it is well to find it out before we are in a false position; for it may be that we are in danger of attempting what is too big for us simply because we think too much of ourselves. The truth must be important enough to contend and suffer for, and many points of view lack this importance. The third rule was enforced by our Lord when He deprecated a display of pearls before people of a brutish nature.

When all that is said, however, and we have guarded ourselves against waste of enthusiasm it is clear that even in these humaner days a real loyalty to Christ will bring persecution. The thumbscrew and the rack have their refined modern equivalents. However high the world may reach in the standard of life, those who are following Christ will always be a little way ahead, holding out for the impossible. However far we move in moral or spiritual advance, Jesus will always be ahead of us. We have learned enough of His supremacy to know that every new step forward is but a discovery of some fresh beam of His truth which was waiting to break out. So the Cross 'leads the generations on.' It is a question whether the true Church can ever hope to be anything but an unpopular remnant, a company of fools for Christ's sake.

2. *A touchstone.*—A Christian man is an incarnate conscience in the community in which he lives. He lets in a flood of light. He introduces a new standard of values. One of the reasons why Christ was hated was just that He was what He was. His life was a silent judgment seat. He quickened men's consciences, and many a ghost which they imagined had been laid for ever He set walking through the rooms of memory. Men saw themselves; and the sight was not flattering to pride.

There came a man—whence, none could tell,
Bearing a touchstone in his hand;
And tested all things in the land
By its unerring spell.

And lo, what sudden changes smote
The fair to foul, the foul to fair!
Purple nor ermine did he spare,
Nor scorn the dusty coat.

But though they slew him with a sword
And in a fire his touchstone burned,
Its doings could not be o'erturned,
Its undoings restored.

[1] *Cathedral and University Sermons.*

When the light of Christ begins to move in a man's soul either he submits and comes to Him, or else he begins to hate Him, to feel he must get rid of Him, because there is no peace in His presence.

¶ Tyndall, writing on *The Forms of Water*, remarks: 'Curious, then, as the conclusion may be, the cold ice of the Alps has its origin in the heat of the sun.' By one set of conditions the sun calls forth the leaves of grass, the blossoms of the garden, the charm of flowers, the glory of the corn, and paints with emerald, purple, and gold the palm, the vine, and the orange; but through another set of conditions it causes snow and ice, and becomes the architect of the awful avalanches and glaciers of the Alps.[1]

The persecution of Christ is the finest tribute to His influence. There must have been something about His message and personality very powerful and penetrating, when men combined all their forces, both civil and ecclesiastical, and sank the animosities of centuries, in order to put Him to death. That we should be hated by some people would be a big testimony to the vitality of our Christianity.

It is not always the antagonism of those who do not see the Christian values which we have to expect. It is that rather of those who have come to see, and whose antagonism is the reflection of their own internal conflict. 'Consider,' says the writer to the Hebrews, 'him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself'; or as it is translated with equal authority, 'against themselves.' Jesus created an inward conflict of which He had to bear the brunt, and there is no exemption from this for His disciples.

¶ What I grow impatient of are the censures of rigid people, who desire to limit the hopes and possibilities of others by the little foot-rule which they have made for themselves. That is a very petty and even a very wicked thing to do, that old persecuting instinct which says, 'I will make it as unpleasant for you as I can, if you will not consent at all events to pretend to believe what I think it right to believe.' A man of science does not want to persecute a child who says petulantly that he will not believe the law of gravity. He merely smiles and goes on his way. The law of gravity can look after itself! Persecution is as often as not an attempt to reassure oneself about one's own beliefs; it is not a sign of an untroubled faith.[1]

But, apart from this, selfishness and other forms of evil have a way of entrenching themselves in all sorts of interests and fighting there to retain their hold.

(1) There is the *money interest*, which a live Christianity will threaten in various directions. The story of the rise of persecution in the book of Acts shows that interest as very much alive. When Paul began to preach in Ephesus—the centre of the worship of the goddess Diana—the people saw at once to what his doctrine was leading. It meant the overthrow of that worship, and the worship gone, their trade gone also. So at once there was opposition. And have we not to-day the same kind of opposition to meet? What, for instance, of the traffic in drink? How much of the opposition to temperance reform is due to the money interest? The traffic, too, in arms? The war-spirit has several roots which will need to be cut before there can be any assurance of peace. And one of the roots is the money sunk in armament factories.

(2) But other kinds of vested interests stand in the way of righteousness. There is the *interest of governments*. The old battle between Church and State has gone on for centuries. Sometimes the fight dies down for want of some definite moral issue. But again and again a living Christianity will be found to clash with the policy of the State. Repeatedly the followers of Christ have had to take their stand against it. They have been called unpatriotic—traitors to their country—the foes of order and security. They will be called so again, whenever, in response to the higher way of Jesus, they feel compelled to refuse what the State may ask, and persecution will follow. The interests of ordered government helped to bring Christ before Pilate. He was threatening the supremacy of the Roman Empire, so it was alleged. 'If you let this man go, you are not Cæsar's friend.' He was called unpatriotic by the people of His own nation, for His message was that of God's love, not for them alone, but for all men. He taught that higher patriotism which consists not in masterful dominion but in lowly service, and it sharpened the nails that fastened Him to His Cross.

(3) Sometimes the instrument of persecution

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Ashes of Roses*, 70.

[1] A. C. Benson, *Joyous Gard*, 132.

has been *the Church* itself. Religion becomes organized. The practice of Christianity becomes a mere convention. Its faith that was once the fire of a living experience becomes hardened into a creed, into a form of words which is insufficient for the living spirit of truth, and may even deny the new light that has dawned.

¶ We confess before God and the world the sins and failures of which the Churches have been guilty, through lack of love and sympathetic understanding. Loyal seekers after truth and righteousness have been kept away from Christ, because His followers have so imperfectly represented Him to mankind.[1]

Conventional people do not like to feel the breath of reality sweeping through customs which have grown dear, or to be jolted out of their familiar ruts of thought by the making of new tracks. The commonplaces of to-day were the heresies of yesterday, but there is nothing people so easily forget. Less than a hundred years ago George Canning described to a listening House of Commons how he had gone to a little Presbyterian church in London and heard a phrase which had haunted him ever since; it was 'the Fatherhood of God.' Not much longer ago, for proclaiming that truth, men were hunted from their pulpits; and yet it is the very centre of Christ's message. Thus the Spirit of God leads us on. Jesus is ever being rediscovered, but wherever His truth leads into new territory, and opens up new aspects, there will be bitterness and conflict.

(4) And what of business and commerical life to-day? What of our *social conventions*? What of the ways of thinking in which we look out at one another through mists of suspicion or fear? 'Sons of God,' 'Children of the Father,' 'Brethren for whom Christ died'—these are phrases which have in them tremendous explosive power, and they cut right across many of our conventional social attitudes and business relationships. And further, and wider, 'neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, but all one in Christ Jesus.' There—in that—is another great seed of Christian thinking which is bound to rend the rocks of old prejudices, and make tremendous changes in our international outlook, and our ways of treating other nations.

¶ Mr Graham Wallas has drawn an amusing picture between the idea of England as it exists in the minds respectively of a Labour Member of Parliament, an officer of the Guards, and a Bishop. If a man can see his own country so inaccurately, through glasses so tinged with his own prepossessions, how much more is this the case with other lands and other types of men! There is no cure for this tyranny so effective as to cultivate a habit of looking at nations and men as God sees them, trying to absorb the mind of Christ in regard to the human beings for whom He died; cultivating a long view of the great destiny for which men in their various groups were created, and to which, if we are alive and alert, they can be guided.[1]

The changes which this new outlook demands cannot be made without trouble. The way of a Christian man can never be easy to find or to follow. He will be here and there up against methods and practices which are inconsistent with his faith. How far he can acquiesce in a system which he may feel to be unchristian is a matter for a man's own conscience. No one can shut his eyes to the fact that a radical Christianity would involve changes. The difficulty is that these, made suddenly, would produce dislocations which are themselves disastrous. To use a familiar illustration, we are in the position of a railway company which has to change its method of working a big station and at the same time keep the train service running at full pressure. It is only bit by bit that the Christian outlook can become supreme and come to regulate the common life. Yet every pioneer must be ready to face the hazard of pioneering. The way forward is always, for the first people who take it, both dangerous and lonely. He who would follow Christ must be prepared to take risks and face individual loss. He must be ready to walk alone, to face the disapproval of a majority, to become a fool for Christ's sake.

[1] Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work, Aug. 1925.

The Joy of the Hard Way

Luke xxi. 12.—'They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you . . . for my name's sake.'

Matt. v. 11, 12.—'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you . . . Rejoice, and be exceeding glad.'

1. In these words Christ indicates what will happen to all who go *the hard way* He would

[1] F. Theodore Woods, *Great Tasks and Inspirations*, 27.

lead them. No man can read these words about persecution and say they were uttered by One who dreamed an impossible dream. He who gave to men the unworldliest counsel never for a moment left the world out of His reckonings. He knew that He was calling men to seek humility in a proud world, meekness in a self-assertive world, the way of mercy in a world that believes in vengeance, the clean heart in a world full of all manner of moral stain and pollution, the work of peace in a world of variance, fever, and fear. And He names the inevitable result of such a quest. He points out the cost of faith and obedience. The way into the happiness of the Kingdom is a hard way. Jesus knew that the creed and the life to which He was calling men were utterly and finally opposed to the creed and the life of the world. He knew that as long as there were materialism and selfishness among men the Blessed Way would be a difficult and even painful way.

In the thought of the Teacher, persecution stood for any and every form of soul-conflict with the world-powers, a conflict which, in some way or other, every true disciple must experience. 'Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake.' Blessed are they that find themselves ever more opposed to the ideals and the practices of a self-seeking, God-forgetting world.

The hardness of the way will be a different thing in each man's life. The kind of pain he will suffer will depend on the particular circumstances of his earthly lot. To some who seek to tread the 'Blessed Way,' persecution comes in a very direct and literal form. Some are called to live the Christly life in homes where there is much to hinder them and nothing to help them. Some are called to be faithfnl and pure amidst daily associations that make faith and purity hard to keep.

When the Blessed Way for any man or woman lies through an irreverent home or a godless workshop it is a hard way. But that is only one form of the world's hostility to Jesus Christ and to them that are His. The head of the firm in his office, who has, maybe, never experienced five minutes' bullying since he left school, cannot tread the Blessed Way without paying the full price of faithfulness. In a world that is avowedly selfish and deliberately unclean in its striving after wealth, the cost of the clean heart is as high for the master who gives his orders as it is for the servant who carries them out. So it is with the politician, the civil servant, the member of any learned profession, and the minister of the gospel. It is sometimes said that ministers live sheltered lives. But that is a poor, superficial judgment. There is no protection for any man in mere circumstance. The hard way does not grow easier though it lies through a room lined with commentaries on the Scriptures, the wisdom of many ages, and the lives of the saints. And as for 'sheltered' lives, there is but one shelter for any human life in this world of strife and sin, and that is under the shadow of His wings, in the mercy and love of God in Jesus Christ.

The Blessed Way, then, into which Jesus has directed us is, and must be, hard for them that tread it. The Master was ever at great pains to show men that it could not be otherwise. The Shadow of the Cross fell on all His teaching about life. But that shadow is illumined for us by these words, 'Happy are they that are persecuted.' Happy are they that find in heart and life the cost and pain of love and obedience and unstained hope.

¶ 'I pray you, dear wife, be merry in God,' said Sir Thomas More on his way to execution, and that is how they speak whose face is towards the sunrise. Even now the shadows are behind them, and their path is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

2. What did Jesus mean by calling the hard way *the way of blessedness*? How does the joy of the hard way come to those that tread it? It does not lie in certain compensations for things given up or forgone. Nothing that goes to make joy is given up. They who tread this way do not turn their backs on happiness, they face it and find it in every step, and in every struggle. If a man misses this joy it is not because of the hardness he has endured, it is rather because of the hardness he has tried to escape.

(1) The joy of the hard way *lies in a nearer fellowship with Christ*. See what persecution did for the Early Church! It was when the Early Church was hunted and harried by Saul and those like him that it really began to live on its faith and to grow into power. The comfortable nest of fellowship in which they had nourished their souls was broken, and the

members were scattered abroad. But in that scattering they carried the truth and the faith into other parts of the world, and on their journeys realized for the first time the amazing resources of their Lord. For as they went He joined Himself to their company, and they found in His presence that their faith was not a mere hothouse plant which could only be kept alive in shelter, but a living thing whose roots went down into the everlasting springs. Faith grew the stronger when nothing but the strand of faith bound them to Him. The presence of Christ became real, as it always does to those who trust Him in a great loyalty that has nothing else to trust. Persecution, scorn, disapproval—the cold winds that seem to threaten faith—are just the things which strengthen it.

¶ Robertson of Brighton was a preacher of righteousness who followed the truth wherever it led him, and willingly paid the price of convictions which jarred against a conventional Christianity. A soldier prophet, his spirit warred against all manner of compromise with evil, and few have suffered more in body and mind. The heart which ever responded to the trumpet call of duty was broken at last by the onset of invisible foes, but he possessed the kingdom of Heaven. A lady with whom he was slightly acquainted assailed him for his opinions, and even menaced him with the consequence in this world and the next. His only reply was, 'I don't care.' 'Do you know what "don't care" came to, sir?' 'Yes, madam,' was the grave reply, 'He was crucified on Calvary.'[1]

(2) *There is an inherent joy* in all that is endured for righteousness' sake. Experience confirms this. No man ever regretted the silence of meekness and humility, no matter what that silence cost him. No man ever wished unsaid the word of mercy and reconciliation, though he had to slay himself to say it. No man ever looked back with sorrow upon the brief pleasure, or temporal gain, sacrificed in the name of the clean heart. There is a reward of faithfulness that follows close upon the act of fidelity, a sense of satisfying joy in the heart. That joy is made up of many things, but it may be described by one phrase that covers them all, it is the joy of being right. The hard way is the glad way, because it is the right way. It is the way the soul is meant to go, and as in the way of selfishness there are no real gains, so in the way of Christ-pleasing there are no real losses. There are opposition and suffering, but to feel that opposition and to endure that suffering is to have in your inner life a clear testimony to the rightness of your own heart.

(3) The joy of the hard way *lies in its fellowships*. 'So persecuted they the prophets that were before you.' The path of faith is hallowed by the footsteps of God's saints, and most of all by One who for the joy that was set before Him, yea, and the joy that was within Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame. Between every man and the true joy of life there stands a cross, and if the shadow of that cross affrights him he can never pass into the highest fellowship in life. Every man ought to be anxious to get into 'the best society,' but let him first of all be assured as to where that is to be found, and what is the passport to it. The best society on earth is the communion of saints, and it is entered by the Blessed Way.

O the way sometimes is low,
And the waters dark and deep,
And I stumble as I go.

But I have a tryst to keep:
It was plighted long ago
With some who lie asleep.

And though days go dragging slow,
And the sad hours gravewards creep,
And the world is hushed in woe,

I neither wail nor weep,
For He would not have it so,
And I have a tryst to keep.[1]

(4) And the joy of the hard way lies most of all in this, *it leads to the kingdom*. 'Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' They do not possess the kingdom because they suffer and endure, they suffer and endure because they possess the kingdom. A man does not know what the dominion of this world means till he rejects it and accepts the dominion of Jesus Christ. Then the arrogant and clamorous world-powers gather about him, and he knows what it is to be persecuted, to be 'followed up,' as the word implies, by the evil things he has rejected,

[1] Stopford A. Brooke, *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*.

[1] From *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, 240.

disowned, and defied. The sinful world has countless ways of attacking the disciple and servant of Jesus Christ, but blessed are they to whom it offers any of its spiritual oppositions, be they fair and alluring, or cruel and grim, for these oppositions are only offered to such as have the law and pledge of the Saviour's Kingdom in their hearts.

Providence

Luke xxi. 18.—'There shall not an hair of your head perish.'

No truth is more precious, alike for strength in life and hope in death, than the truth of the Providence of God. It is the great roof over our human world, without which we are left shelterless and exposed. Next in importance to the fact that God exists is the faith that He cares for men. When that faith grows dim life loses most of its high meaning, and men seem like motes that float in the evening sunlight doomed to die in the dark.

Faith in Providence means that God is our Provider, our Protector, and our Preserver. As to the first of these, there has never been any doubt. Thus much we believe if we believe in God at all. Greek and Roman writers were eloquent in their praise of the wise and bountiful provision for the welfare of the human race, but beyond that fact their faith did not go. When they tried to go further, misgiving began. They seemed to think the Supreme Being too great to be concerned with the details of the life of man: whereas in the teaching of Jesus He is too great not to do it. Hence the pathetic refrain in classic lore, 'The gods do not care.' In one form or another this idea of Divine indifference pursued the classic mind like a Nemesis, casting a long shadow over it. Nor has that shadow entirely vanished yet, despite the modern vision of the universal reign of law and the increasing sense of the Divine indwelling. Let a great disaster befall humanity and that white-faced fear grips many a heart with an icy grasp, and almost freezes faith.

Time out of mind it has been so. Almost from the beginning man has been puzzled by the apparent indifference of God to human affairs, and His seeming silence to the cry of the race. Job, sorely smitten and afflicted, wished that he might find God and argue the matter; and Isaiah, looking up from his page, said, 'Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself.' Even Jesus on the Cross felt, for one bitter moment, that He was forsaken of God. Of this hiding of God there is no doubt, but the real problem is to interpret the meaning of it. Manifestly, if we are to find any clue to the arrangement of life, we must first ask: What is the purpose of the life of man? What is the Eternal Will trying to do with us here upon the earth? Then the second question follows naturally: Is the arrangement of life as we know it adapted to the fulfilment of that purpose? After that there remains but one other question, and that is, how can we work with God toward the realization of the Divine ideal and end of our mortal life?

1. What is the purpose of life? Man thinks he was made for happiness, by which he usually means health, wealth, home, kin, friends, and other things of a sort similar. But happiness cannot be the chief end of life, as is shown by the fact that those who make it their first quest do not find it. What if the true end of life be something else, something higher, fairer, more worth while, to which all these things are incidental; an ideal in which happiness itself is a means, not an end? What if man was made to be a moral creator in a world of his own—what then? As a matter of fact, does not this describe more truly than any other term what every man knows his relation to life to be? Our life here, so far as we can grasp its purpose, is a process of Divine education, meant to fulfil all the powers of our nature—that is, to awaken and develop the soul.

¶ 'We fail to reach any reasonable view of this world,' says the Dean of Manchester, 'if we consider that its purpose is to provide happiness. Creation has largely disregarded pleasure. Pleasure can afford no clue to the meaning of the world, which is confessedly an imperfect world. If, however, we regard the world, not as a workshop for creating happiness, or a home to enjoy it, but as a workshop for creating goodness, beauty, truth, then many difficulties disappear.

'In the world goodness can begin to grow. Indeed, it has been well said that an imperfect world is necessary to produce goodness. And such a view of the world is alone consistent with

the idea of a universe, not a multiverse. It alone enables us to see one mind ruling over all and one purpose working its way out in the world: Man and his surroundings uniting to create things of eternal value.

'But to create these eternal things, to produce goodness involves struggle, pain, cross. It is by the daily dyings that we mount from the lower experience to the higher.'[1]

2. If such be the purpose of life, what is its arrangement? Under the wise restrictions of universal laws the Divine Father allows man to have a real influence and power in the making of his own world, and prefers to rule men in and through men themselves. Hence the apparent withdrawal of God, in which lie the pathos, the terror, and the glory of human life. God is never far away—'in him we live and move and have our being'—but things are so ordered that man makes his own world; wisely if he works in harmony with the law of God, unwisely and tragically if he works in contempt of it. At bottom the only question is whether it is wise and worth while for man to have so large a share in determining his own life. To answer that question we should have to know 'the far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves,' and the ultimate end in view. That we do not know; but God knows it, and He thinks the end justifies the risk and peril and tragedy of the process. Even we can see that such a plan recognises the reality and worth of the human world, and provides man with a discipline such as he could not get in any other way. Not only so, but it evokes and develops qualities not otherwise to be developed, and makes for the attainment of a character which would else be impossible.

Here is the answer, in part at least, to the many dark questions which rise up out of this theme. Why, with a good and wise God, is not our world perfect; why weakness and disease, wrong and suffering, when with such powers abroad in the universe there might have been only happiness? Why should truth be on the scaffold and wrong on the throne? Why the infinite horror of war, desolating, defiling, devouring the race in an orgy of blood and lust and ruin? That is to ask, why does not God do everything for man, leaving him to live at ease with nothing to evoke what is heroic and godlike in him? God will not do what man can and ought to do.

¶ The schoolboy who finds a companion to do all his sums for him may regard his helper as a special providence. But he is not a good providence. Why should man be cured of his diseases by miracle? Let him learn to cure himself. That will give him not only health but the laws of health—so much larger a possession. His difficulties, his miseries—what are they but a perpetual challenge to try again? Every human weakness, every social disorganization, every hindrance to our perfecting, lies there before us: not as evidence of heaven's indifference, but as heaven's challenge to our own effort. We are to work out our own salvation, the only salvation that can be of any value to us.[1]

Thus God works for man in and through man and seldom, if at all, in any other way. If mankind is raised to better and nobler things, if evils are abolished, it is always through high and faithful human effort. By as much as righteousness is incarnated in human character and activity, by so much does it triumph upon the earth—and no more. Truth asks for human voices to utter its message, justice needs human hands to work its bidding—sweet voices and clean hands to join the streets of the city of man to the streets of the City of God. The Divine does not invade the human world for conquest. He is here, moving us with inspirations, exalting us with dreams, alluring us with visions, and stirring us with mighty hopes; but He does not intrude, except at times to overule huge blunders and save man from destroying himself. Such seems to be the method of Divine Providence, and it throws a revealing light over the long tragic story of man.

Looking backward, one sees no lack of Divine providence, but an amazing display of the most stupid, thick-witted human improvidence. What shortsightedness, what waste, what an enormous range of woeful experience, what immeasurable suffering; and the guilty party was man, not God.

¶ Notwithstanding continual warnings and the wholesale tragedies of successive generations, the Italian peasants will not be removed from the slopes of Etna. Seventy years ago a torrent of lava, six miles long, twelve feet high, and

[1] *The Cambridge Review.*

[1] J. Brierley, *The Secret of Living*, 164.

two miles broad, swept down the sides of the mountain, licking up everything in its path. And within the last century there have been at least a hundred outbreaks. Yet the people return.

But those peasants are not the only incredibly stupid men now upon earth. The neglect of sanitation, the annual harvest of infant mortality, the crowding of masses into the slums to rot, the insanity of war, the spread of loathsome diseases which pollute human love and blight its offspring—these, and a thousand other ills, spawn of selfishness and stupidity, come under the same head. Surely man will yet learn wisdom from the failures of the past, and not go on repeating them on a vaster scale. But he is still a gambler, thinking that by some chance or magic he can escape the results of his folly.

3. If our life is to have real worth and meaning we must be fellow-workers with God. Our life, though it be a day soon done, can help to make all other days better, and add its breath to the making of an atmosphere in which injustice cannot live. Also, when human providence has done its utmost, we must rely at last upon a providence wiser than our wisest and tenderest wisdom. Life was meant to be heroic. We are in jeopardy every hour, and must daily face the final bereavement which waits for every man. When we have put forth all our foresight and skill, our light shines but a little way, and we must trust Him in whose wise, protecting care we live and die. Faith is the last, as it is the first, necessity of mortal life. But is there no higher word for us to take with us as we go to the duty and danger of the morrow? Indeed, yes; and for this we turn to Him who taught us that God cares for each one of us, despite our carelessness. The faith of Jesus rested, first, upon what God is, and, second, upon what man is, revealing the love of God which cares for a son made in His likeness. Holding this faith, in every age devout men have felt themselves in the hand of a living, personal, particular providence. No one can prove such a faith to another. It is not to be argued about. It is a great and blessed experience open to all, and happy are those who win it in the midst of the years. No one has put this matter better than Browning in his *Christmas Eve*:

> I can but testify
> God's care for me—no more, can I—
> It is but for myself I know;
> . . . . . .
> No mere mote's-breadth but teems immense
> With witnessings of Providence:
> . . . . . .
> Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,
> God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
> Whereby the truth from heaven slid
> Into my soul?—I cannot bid
> The world admit He stooped to heal
> My soul, as if in a thunder-peal
> Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,
> I only knew He named my name.

The Making of a Soul

Luke xxi. 19.—'In your patience ye shall win your souls' (R.V.).

Many of us are perhaps more familiar with the text in the form in which it occurs in the Authorised Version, where we read, 'In your patience possess ye your souls.' At any rate we frequently talk of possessing our souls in patience and imagine we are quoting the New Testament. As a matter of fact 'possess' is a particularly bad translation, and the Revisers rightly rejected it. What Jesus said was 'win' or 'get,' or, if we like, 'come to possess,' and His words were not a command or an exhortation, but a promise of an assurance: 'In your patience shall you win your souls.'

The change is important, so important that Bishop Westcott thought all the work on the Revised Version of the New Testament well spent had the only result been to secure this change.

1. Christ takes for granted that the Twelve have their souls yet to win. By means of your patience or endurance, He says, ye shall win them. And yet they had followed Him for some three years now. They had heard His words, and watched Him at His work, and been familiar with all His ways.

The common idea is that the human soul is a spiritual entity, a thing complete in itself, created and coming into being as we come into this world, a thing which we are to nurture and discipline, and which attains its perfectionment when we leave this world. But this is not the

teaching of Christ. There is no completeness or finality reached by the soul during this life, or at its close. These spiritual things, called souls, are entrusted to us as bundles of potentialities—that is, things capable of realization and growth, and not as completed actualities. God entrusts our souls to us, that we through the help of Christ may make them what He would have them to be, and by so doing may make them our own. Now in the teaching of our Lord this idea is emphasized. 'In your endurance ye shall win your souls.' These words clearly recognize that a man has a right to his soul, but that he cannot realize that right save through effort and endurance. Again, while elsewhere in Luke (xvi. 12) our Lord strongly affirms that a man's soul is his own, He just as strongly lays stress on the fact that, if a man is not faithful, his soul will be taken from him: 'If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?' Or, speaking from another standpoint elsewhere: 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'

2. But these words of our Lord call for further comment. In them two things are placed in vivid contrast: the first thing is, 'that which is another's'; the second is, 'that which is your own.' Now the latter remarkable phrase, 'that which is your own,' is Christ's definition of the human soul. And over against the soul of man—'that which is your own,' Christ sets everything else in this world and calls it 'that which is another's.' What an illuminating judgment is here pronounced on the current conceptions of this world. Wealth, talents, high birth, rank, strength physical or intellectual, power, beauty—all the so-called possessions of this world, its most coveted and desirable things, the outward things which in the estimation of the world alone count, are just those which our Lord singles out as the unimportant—nay, more, which He simply designates as 'that which is another's'; in other words, they are only temporary possessions, which may be recalled at any moment, and which no man can retain beyond the narrow handbreadth of time alloted to him here.

The soul is then, as set over against other so-called possessions, the one possession here on earth—not that a man has as his own, but that a man can, if he is faithful, make his own.

Our life is but a little holding, lent
To do a mighty labour: we are one
With heaven and the stars when it is spent
To serve God's aim: else die we with the sun.

3. There is another thought in our Lord's words. There is something intermittent in the life of the soul. If the soul means a manhood alive toward God and in rapport with the spiritual world, do we not all see how easy it is even after gaining to lose it again? Yesterday we were fairly alive toward Him. We were assured of His presence with us in our life, of His interest in us, of His love toward us, of His power to sanctify and change us, and that that blessed process was going on. And to-day where is that great assurance? Mostly gone! We can realize no present personal relation to Him, can only grope after Him in the dark, and send up stifled prayers which we hardly think will reach Him.

4. The winning or the losing of the soul is the question of supremest importance for man, just as the winning or the losing of the soul of England is even now the supremest question of the hour for England and her Empire—an infinitely harder and greater conquest to achieve than that already won in the War. How may we win our souls then?

(1) First *by practising the presence of God.* It is for God the soul thirsts. It is by fellowship with God the soul lives and thrives. Let a man practise the presence of God, let him be much in prayer, and no matter what his outward circumstances may be, he will become a man of great soul. It is impossible to have a great soul without this. 'If a man abide not in me,' said Jesus, 'he is cast forth as a branch and is withered.' Notice that word—he is *withered.* Apart from God the soul is like a branch divorced from the parent stem; there is no principle of life in it, it 'withers,' it 'shrivels,' it 'dies.'

¶ Those of you who have read Stevenson's letters will perhaps remember one he wrote from Mentone after an attack of illness that had left him so prostrate that he was not allowed to speak or read. This is what he says about those days when he was cut off from all mental stimulus and sustenance. 'As an intellectual

being I have not yet begun to re-exist; my immortal soul is very nearly extinct. Being sent to the south is not much good unless you take your soul with you; and my soul is rarely with me here. I don't see much beauty, I have lost the key. I am a manacled and hide-bound spirit, incapable of pleasure, the clay of a man.' Robbed of the stimulus of books, Stevenson's mind was dull and torpid and withered and dead. And as it was with Stevenson's mind when deprived of books, so is it with the soul when deprived of God. Apart from Him the soul withers, like a dead branch.[1]

And in the second place, *follow Christ and give your utmost to the highest.* Every time we choose the hard right way, rather than the easy wrong way, we gain soul. Every time we sacrifice ease and comfort to do service to our fellows we gain soul. Every time we say a kindly word and do a loving deed we gain soul. When F. N. Charrington gave up a fortune to fight the drink, he gained soul. When Frank Crossley gave up comfort in Bowdon and went and lived in Ancoats to minister to the poor, he gained soul. When Dr Peter Fraser gave up position and fame at home to go and be a missionary in the far-off Khassia hills, he gained soul. For the soul lives and grows and expands on love and kindness and sacrifice. Our heart is always enlarged when we run in the way of God's commandments.

But to gain soul is a costly business. It is an easy matter to lose soul; it costs effort, sacrifice, agony to gain it.

> Our flesh and sense must be denied,
> Passion and envy, lust and pride

—that is the way to gain soul, and that is not easy. To 'crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof'—that is the way to gain soul, and that is not easy. To do the right in scorn of consequence is the way to gain soul, and that is not easy. To subordinate self and be willing to spend and be spent for others is the way to gain soul, and that is not easy. To hold cheap what the world most values and to live for the unseen and eternal is the way to gain soul, and that is not easy. That is why Christ says in the text, 'In your patient endurance ye shall win your souls.' We have to set our teeth; to go through with it; to stick to it; to hold fast. That is the law not only of the spiritual but also of the mental world.

It is by patient endurance, by steadfast loyalty to the highest and the best, by faithful following of that Christ in whom that best is embodied, that we gain soul.

¶ In his *Memoirs* Mark Pattison says of himself: 'I have really no history but a mental history. . . . I have seen no one, known none of the celebrities of my own time intimately or at all, and have only an inaccurate memory for what I hear. *All my energy was directed upon one end—to improve myself, to form my own mind*, to sound things thoroughly, to free myself from the bondage of unreason and the traditional prejudices which, when I began first to think, constituted the whole of my intellectual fabric.'[1]

¶ Surely the view taken by James Smetham—a great artist, an artist appreciated by men like Ruskin and Rossetti—is the true one. Yet people said he 'had not got on somehow.' The temptation came to Smetham to paint for money, to sacrifice his artistic ideals in order to make a fortune. If only he had condescended to become a fashionable portrait painter, he might have ended his days a rich man. But he put the temptation far from him. Bravely setting aside the disappointment of outward failure, he writes of himself: 'his feet are on a rock; his goings (so far) established, with a new song in his mouth and joy on his head—and 4s. 6d. this blessed moment in his pocket, besides some postage stamps.'

5. Let us turn the searchlight upon our lives. Is the kind of life we live making or destroying soul? Which is it with us—are we living the selfish or the sacrificial life? Are we loving the world or are we following Christ? To gain a soul—that is the supreme end and aim of life. Live for that! Contend earnestly for that! Sacrifice everything for that! Count all things to be loss for that! For the soul is the eternal part of us; the soul is the Divine and heavenly part of us; the soul it is that prepares us and makes us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Hope of the Gospel*, 107.

[1] S. Cox, *Expositions*, ii. 153.

In Your Endurance

Luke xxi. 19.—'In your patience ye shall win your souls' (R.V.).

1. The Revisers made one important correction in this text—when they altered the word 'possess' to 'win.' It is greatly to be wished, however, that they had gone a step further, and had given us a better rendering than the word 'patience.' The word is liable to give rise to a misconception, because by 'patience' we generally understand quiet waiting, whereas this was not at all what Jesus meant. In the New Testament there are two distinct words which in English may be translated by the word 'patience.' The first means 'long-suffering.' In the words of Bishop Lightfoot, it denotes that 'self-restraint which does not hastliy retaliate a wrong.' This, however, is not the word here used. The second word means 'steadfastness, constancy, endurance.' 'It is the temper which does not hastily succumb under suffering,' says Lightfoot. This is the word used in our text. 'In your endurance shall you win your souls.'

2. The significance of this utterance becomes clearer when we consider the circumstances with which St Luke connects it. It belongs to a section in which Jesus speaks of the calamities which will overtake His followers in the time to come. They will be persecuted, they will be delivered up to synagogues and prisons, they will be brought before kings and governors. Some of them will even be put to death. Note the fine transition which follows, 'And not a hair of your head shall perish.' This is no contradiction of what Jesus has just said. He is speaking of the things which really matter. 'Some of you shall they cause to be put to death,' He says. 'And not a hair of your head shall perish!'

Now what a feeble thing it would have been for Jesus to have said after all this, 'In your patience possess ye your souls,' and Jesus was never feeble. What He does say has the force of a strong tonic. It is like the cold douche, which at first gives a pang of deathly cold, but finally leaves us warm and glowing. He does not sympathize with His disciples; He almost congratulates them. It is like Walt Whitman's ode, 'To One Shortly to Die,'

I do not commiserate, I congratulate you.

These men are going to suffer, and yet Jesus tells them they will not be hurt; to lose precious things, and yet He tells them they are going to win something. They are about to die, some of them, and yet they are going to live as they have never lived before. There is something trumpet-like about it all. It is the very wine of life. 'They shall lay hands on you and persecute you. . . . Ye shall be delivered up even by parents. . . . Some of you shall they cause to be put to death.' Then follows the cry of spiritual audacity, 'And not a hair of your head shall perish,' and finally the promise that is better than any pity: 'In your endurance shall you win your souls.'

¶ Death is farther from most of us than we fancy, and if we would but risk all, to win or lose all, we could almost always do the deed which looks so grimly impossible. Those who have faced great physical dangers, or who have been matched by fate against overwhelming odds of anxiety and trouble, alone know what great things are done when men stand at bay and face the world, and fate, and life, and death, and misfortune, all banded together against them, and say in their hearts, 'We will win this fight or die.' Then, at that word, when it is spoken earnestly, in sincerity and truth, the iron will rises up and takes possession of the feeble body, the doubting soul shakes off its hesitating weakness, is drawn back upon itself like a strong bow bent double, is compressed and full of a terrible latent power, like the hand ful of deadly explosive which, buried in the bosom of the rock, will presently shake the mighty cliff to its roots, as no thunderbolt could shake it.[1]

These words, then, tell us what is the reward of endurance. They speak to ourselves as well as to the disciples. They tell us how to face life, how to meet its rebuffs, its disappointments; they brace us for the hour of death. They assure us that if only we will bear up against the trials of life valiantly, resolutely, we suffer no real loss, that courage wins character. This is just what Jesus said upon another occasion and in other words: 'Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.' It is precisely the same truth, though it may not be recognized as such at once, which is expressed in the parallel account to Luke's narrative in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, where Jesus is represented

[1] Marion Crawford, *A Cigarette Maker's Romance.*

as saying, 'He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.'

3. Some time ago in an Indian College a Hindu student said to his English professor, 'Sir, I have a curiosity to know what the soul is.' Some of us perhaps may say that we too have a curiosity to know what the soul is, for the fact is that, while Christian people frequently speak of the soul, they do not often stay to inquire what they mean by the term. The reality we designate by the word 'soul' is something with which psychology, philosophy and religion all deal, but as the word, so far as its common usage goes, is Biblical, it will be well to ask what the Scriptures teach.

The simplest meaning of the word 'soul,' as it is used in the Bible, is that of animated being, whether man or animal. It stands for the higher life of man as distinguished from bodily existence. Human life, therefore, according to the Scripture, is twofold; there is a higher and a lower element—there is soul and there is flesh. Frequently we meet with the word 'spirit,' but this does not indicate a third constituent of human nature. Sometimes 'soul' and 'spirit' are simply parallel terms, and even where they are expressly distinguished they describe the same thing regarded from different points of view. Thus the inner life in its relation to God is 'spirit'; in itself it is 'soul.' More strictly regarded, the word represents the living personality, that which a man calls himself. The 'soul' is not a pale ghost-like shadow which slips away at death. It is not something distinguished from myself, which I may be said to own. My 'soul' is myself, my deepest life.

But besides denoting the self as actual, in Scripture the word means the self as ideal. My 'soul,' that is to say, is not only what I am already, but what I may become. When, for example, Jesus asks what it profits a man to gain the whole world and to forfeit his life, He uses the word we are considering, and He means not only the life of the particular plane on which we happen to be living, but the highest and fullest development of life which is open to us.

Now it is precisely this idea which lies behind the text. 'In your patience ye shall win your souls.' Here it is plainly implied that the soul is the object of attainment. It is what we may progressively become. It is the richest and the fullest and the largest life of which we are capable. It is not a deposit; it is an investment. Somewhere ahead our true self is waiting to meet us. As it has been truly said, 'Every living soul is heir to an Empire and has fallen into a pit.' What we are is but the pale reflex of what it is in us to become.

¶ The soul is the one possession we have whose development can be carried on to life's latest moment. The years take from us everything else; our bodily vigour, our mental force, our friends, our place and position in the active world. But in this inmost centre of life we can go on still growing, making our losses, our very weakness, an occasion of its further discipline, the incentive of its deeper energies, of ist immortal hopes.[1]

The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made;
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,
As they draw near to their eternal home.

4. We must make up our minds to accept life as it is—with its risks, its tasks, its bereavements, its benedictions—as an opportunity for the making of a soul. If this world of ours were meant for joy alone, it is a failure; if it were meant for smug well-being, it is a foolishness; but if it be meant for a place in which by struggle we can grow strong, and by fighting evil we can win the good, then it is the peer of any star. 'Life,' says Browning, 'is a stuff to try the soul's strength on and educe the man.' Carlyle sneered at Margaret Fuller because she said, 'I accept the universe,' but she was wiser than he. If he ever did accept it, he did so grudgingly, not heartily. Not many men do accept it altogether. It is not easy to do. But life was not meant to be easy; it was meant to be heroic.

God harden me against myself,
This coward with pathetic voice
Who craves for ease, and rest, and joys.

There is no peace of mind until we take the hard conditions of life as a discipline meant to harden what is soft within us, and to soften

[1] J. B. Brierley.

what is hard. The metal must be purified and tested, for

> life is not as idle ore,
> But iron dug from central gloom,
> And heated hot with burning fears,
> And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
> And batter'd with the shocks of doom
> To shape and use.

5. The endurance which is the fruit of acceptance of the discipline of life may be of many kinds and its reward differs with its character. There is the endurance of the Roman, who scorned to flinch before barbarian hosts; that of the Spartan, who counted death better than disgrace. On the one hand there is the endurance of the Red Indian, and on the other that of the Greek philosopher. In some of these cases the endurance was based upon pride, in others upon contempt, in others again upon a sense of the dignity of man. But in every case it sufficed to win a soul of like character to itself. Whether we think of a Regulus, of a Leonidas with his three hundred in the pass of Thermopylæ, of the Indian brave impassive under fiendish torture, of Socrates discoursing calmly while the effects of the hemlock-draught steadily mounted his limbs, we know that in each and every case endurance won a soul.

There is, however, an endurance which is greater than any of these. It is the endurance which springs from a great love, the love of a person and the love of a cause. Again and again it is this which has made homely men heroic, for

> Beneath the veriest ash, there hides a spark of soul,
> Which, quickened by love's breath, may yet pervade the whole
> O' the grey, and, free again, be fire.

It was an endurance of such character that Jesus had in mind when He said, 'In your endurance ye shall win your soul,' an endurance springing from a great love for Himself and the truth for which He stood. And, from the ten persecutions of the Roman Empire throughout the centuries as they have passed, it has been abundantly proved that such an endurance does win the soul. Their contempt of death was one of the charges brought against the early Christians. 'These imbeciles,' wrote a heathen contemporary, 'are persuaded that they are absolutely immortal, and that they will live for ever.' 'Near the sword,' wrote the martyr Ignatius in one of his Epistles, 'the nearer to God; in company with wild beasts, in company with God.' In words which recall the text he says, 'When I am come to the arena, then shall I become a man. Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God.'

¶ A few months ago there was published a moving confession on endurance by the Frenchman Albert Froidevaux. If we need proof to-day of the truth of Christ's message we find it in that life. In the preface we read that proverb from the mists of primitive man: 'Patience is a well from the depths of which one may draw Heaven'; that is the thought of the book, and the mystery of suffering is revealed through the superhuman power of patience in a very human man. If ever youth was driven by impatience it was Albert Froidevaux. Innocent, but shadowed by suspicion of petty theft, he could not wait to clear himself, as he might have done with ease, but driven by impatience and rebellion left home and marched out away into the unknown. That is an episode in his youth. And now Albert Froidevaux lives powerless, maimed. He passed through nameless horrors before he discovered spiritual power, the backbone, as it were, of the gifts of God. 'Henceforth patience is my profession' was the rock on which he founded his life afresh.[1]

Christ Coming as the Son of Man

Luke xxi. 27.—'And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.'

Some Christian conceptions make difficulties for the reason, such as the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Trinity; others make difficulties for the imagination, such as the Last Judgment, the Second Coming of Christ, and Immortality. But when imagination falters, reason can still go on, and when reason fails, faith is still unexhausted. We need to remember these distinctions, because some Christian conceptions are often regarded as

[1] R. D. Beloe, in *The Guardian*, March 26, 1926.

impossible to reason, when they are only impossible to the imagination. It is so with the whole Christian conception of the future. We cannot imagine the conditions which might prevail in another world. We must expect, therefore, that the future will be left to faith and hope, and we must not expect that it can be mapped out or clearly imagined. But without a hope for the future, nothing human can live. It is a natural instinct which Christianity has greatly intensified, and it is an instinct which has a meaning and some answering reality. What is the Christian hope of the future? It was once perfectly clear. There was a confident expectation that Jesus was coming again to earth, this time throned in splendour, acknowledged and worshipped by all. Then those whom this world counted worthless would be exalted to positions of authority and would reign with Christ. This hope buoyed up the first two Christian centuries and kept the Church alive through the ages of persecution. The Christians often encouraged one another with these words: we shall soon be reigning!

This hope was not realized; the first generation passed away and the skies remained silent and unbroken. We find even within the limits of our New Testament an echo of complaint at the postponement of Christ's promise. Gradually the thought of the Church adapted itself to the disappointment. It was the actual experience of Christ's presence and the truth of His teaching that prevented any falling away when the first generations passed without the literal hopes of the Church being realized. This at any rate is eternal and will survive whatever the future may hold, or however long time may endure.

Gradually various interpretations of Christ's words were put forth. The Second Coming of Christ was interpreted to mean His coming through death, when He comes to each one of us to receive us to Himself; or His words were taken to refer to the Last Judgment which was to take place at the end of the world. And these have been the explanations generally favoured by the Church. A small but earnest section of Christians has preserved all down the ages the hope of a more literal fulfilment of Christ's promise, and from Scriptural references has worked out a scheme which provides for a sudden and mysterious return of Christ which is to precede both His coming to reign on the earth and the Last Judgment.

In considering the meaning of Christ's words we may notice three things.

1. It is not conclusive that Jesus expected to return in *a personal visible form*. It will be admitted that the difficulty of understanding what He meant by 'the Son of man' should at least prevent dogmatic assertion in one direction as in another. But it is surely more than accidental that He always chose to speak of His return in the third person, and that He never said in so many works, 'I shall return in power and great glory.' Then are we to make no use of the fact that in Daniel, which is the origin of this phrase, the Son of man does not mean an individual, but a kingdom? When we remember that the great theme of Christ's preaching was a Kingdom, and when we recall His mysterious identification of Himself with little children, His disciples, and those in need or distress, we can see that such an interpretation of the phrase is only in line with the general interest of His mind. Then we possess actual examples of how Christ Himself interpreted apocalyptic language. He held that Elijah had already come in the person of John the Baptist. When His disciples returned from a successful mission of preaching and healing, He exclaimed: 'I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.' This latter is a peculiarly instructive example and can be used as a clue to the interpretation of similar imagery applied to the coming of the Son of man.

2. The promise might be interpreted rather as the coming of the Son of man in great *spiritual upheavals* and in the rise of a new humanity. If we take it this way there are then two things we can explain: first, that the words of Jesus do seem to indicate many comings, and, as our text indicates, a coming which is a process rather than a single event; second, that one of those comings was to take place in that generation.

¶ As we look back upon the story of the Christian era it is wonderful how this view of history is vindicated. There was just such an upheaval in the experience of the generation to which Jesus spoke. In A.D. 70 the centre of Jewish life and religion was suddenly struck out

of existence. Jerusalem fell. It was a time of terrible judgment and suffering, but of sublime Christian opportunity. Ancient moulds of thought were broken in men's minds as completely as were the walls of the city and the Temple. The Jewish people, with many Christians among them, were scattered like dust among the nations, and with their Old Testament culture they prepared a way for Christ into the heart of heathendom. Thus, in the life of that generation, as Jesus promised, men saw the Kingdom of Heaven coming with power.

A similar crisis on a wider scale was the fall of the Roman Empire. Again the moulds of custom and stereotyped thought were broken, and an opportunity of fresh entry for the Truth of Truths occurred. One of the direct results was an outburst of missionary fervour on the part of the Church towards the wild and barbarian peoples of Northern Europe. There was a great return of Christ to the souls of men—the foundations of Western Christianity were laid afresh.

In the twelfth century there occurred that terrible event, the irruption of Muhammadanism. Yet among its results was a great diffusion of learning. Scholars were driven from the cultured East to the uncultured West. Thus there occurred the Renaissance, that great rebirth of learning, leading straight to the Reformation. The French Revolution also and the Napoleonic wars saw a new liberty rise from the ashes of more than one European tyranny. That impulse crystallized itself in the democratic institutions of our own country, and led straight on to the Anti-Slavery movement and the modern social passion.

So we are prepared by Christ's teaching to view the upheaval of the Great War in our own time. Believing Christ's interpretation of history, we can see all the travail of our time bathed in the light of a great hope. As General Smuts said: 'Humanity has struck its tents and is again on the march.' [1]

3. In interpreting Christ's words as *the promise of a Divine Society* we are not turning to an easy interpretation, for there is room for pessimism and despair in our age over this expectation of a Divine race. There seems to be more original sin in the body politic than in the individual soul. The more people there are, the greater seems the struggle for existence. The greater available wealth, the greater the temptation to avarice. Society is worse than the individuals who compose it. The ethics of a nation are always considerably below even the average standard of morality which governs its members.

The attempt at better social organization hardly promises to fulfil the hopes that some place upon it. The socialization of enterprise and industry gives no guarantee of efficiency or honesty. It is not to be wondered at that there are some who are never tired of girding against governments, some who utterly disbelieve in democracy, and some who despair of the value of legislative reforms.

But this attitude cannot be justified. It has taken psychology to teach us how much each one of us owes to society. We are what we are because we have grown up in contact with others, and because of our relationships with them. The illustration of a man on a desert island, which old fashioned theorists were so fond of using, is vitiated by the fact that he could not remain a man. The fact on which Robinson Crusoe was founded was that of a man who, when he was rescued, had forgotten his mother tongue. Religion owes more than we have realized to a communal sense and to fellowship. It cannot long exist in isolation. 'The man who never mixes with the crowd knows nothing.' Christianity needs the gathering together of two or three at least; Christianity finds a Church essential. Therefore there can be nothing in the social organism which is beyond redemption.

But the Divine Society needs to be prepared for. We need a new preaching of the Kingdom as both immanent and imminent. Down in every man's heart there is a desire to be right with others, which if allowed power and room would bring about the ideal state. There is nothing in the nature of men, nothing in our contact with the material, which need finally contradict that hope. Indeed our social relations and our dependence upon the material are part of God's plan for securing that we shall never wander entirely from the true line of progress. His laws work here when we try to disown them, and through man and matter He has sacramental channels which are beyond our power to close. If once righteousness was made

[1] A. D. Belden in *The Christian World Pulpit*, c. 223.

the end of the social order, there would be no more anxiety for the things of food and clothing. All these would be added by natural law, in plenty and freedom for all.

Can the Kingdom of God ever fully come on earth?

Two thousand years have done so little, progress is so slow, there are so many set-backs. Doubtless; but what would have been the course of this world without the Divine manifestation and the Divine programme of Christianity? The Kingdom of God does not come by coercion or display. It is worth waiting for. And there are signs. It matters not in what direction one looks, the past century has done more than all the centuries that precede. Every event in history brings the Kingdom nearer.

¶ That vicious circle of despair of which we hear so much nowadays ('Man has always been that way'; 'Man always will be that way'; 'The world never changes') does not exist. It is an optical illusion.

The line of progress is often interrupted, but if we set aside all sentimental prejudices and render a sober judgment upon the record of the last twenty thousand years (the only period about which we possess more or less concrete information), we notice an indubitable if slow rise from a condition of almost unspeakable brutality and crudeness to a state which holds the promise of something infinitely nobler and better than what has ever gone before, and even the ghastly blunder of the Great War cannot shake the firm conviction that this is true.[1]

But even then, can this earthly dwelling-place of ours offer any final home for the Kingdom of God? It is the dogmatic prophecy of science that the universe is running down, that the sun is losing its heat, and that the day will come when human life will be impossible on this planet. Must we not look elsewhere for the fulfilment of God's purposes, above this world, and only beyond death? We have to remember that Christ taught us to pray that the will of God might be done on earth as in heaven. The apostolic expectation looks for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, and the closing vision of our Scriptures sees the holy city descending out of heaven, and God come down to dwell on earth among men. It may be only our imagination that fails. The division between the two worlds may gradually break down, when men are ready for it. The discovery that the visible world depends upon invisible forces, and the extension of man's sensuous appreciation which psychology seems to forecast, both work from opposite directions towards some extraordinary consummation.

The development of man's spiritual perceptions may bring all heaven before our eyes and give to us the presence of God nearer than the angels can bear it. Not only faith but reason must hold that reality is richer than our thoughts of it can ever be. If Christ is not to come in physical form floating upon the clouds of heaven, it is only because He is going to come in ways far more impressive and glorious, which these expressions can only faintly imagine. That out of such a world as this He stepped at last is promise that God has other and greater things in store, in which existence shall be justified and we shall smile back through our tears at our illusions, fears and pains.

Then let us build for the future, keep our lamps burning and our garments white, and be as those who expect God to surprise us by the revelation of His purpose and the end of His creation.

[1] H. Van Loon, *The Liberation of Mankind*.

Christian Optimism

Luke xxi. 28.—'And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.'

The more you study the life of our Lord Jesus Christ the more you will realize His unconquerable optimism. Over and over again in the teaching of His disciples He corrected their tendency to despondency and gloom. No word, perhaps, was more found on the lips of our Lord than that word, 'Be of good cheer.' We speak of Him rightly as the Man of Sorrows. But that is only one-half of His character. He is the Man of Sorrows; but He is also the Man of Hope. He moves through the world like one whose eyes are fixed upon the far-off Divine event far beyond the suffering and the sorrow that are all round Him. And yet the optimism of Christ is not the easy optimism common enough among us to-day that lives in a world of illusions, and says, 'It is very good.' The Lord knew what was in man, knew to what abysses of meanness a man could fall. He

knew suffering too; His whole life was compassed and circled by it. And so He made no promise of speedy victory or easy conquest. A fundamental optimism then was to be the characteristic of the citizens of this new kingdom. They were to be the children of hope, because they were to be the children of the resurrection. It was not to Calvary or Bethlehem they were to look for the true centre of their lives. It was the future glory, it was the fulfilment, on which their eyes were fixed. It rings through the early literature, that note of the forward look.

¶ In Oliver Cromwell, that great Englishman, one of the most striking characteristics was his hopefulness. 'Hope was born in him,' says Lord Morley, 'like a pillar of fire, when it had gone out in all others.' And in reading his Life nothing becomes more clear and evident than that the secret of this hopefulness was his vision. In the very darkest hours he never lost the vision of a better England, a Commonwealth purified from vice, a State in which life should be pure and honourable.

1. It is this *habit of expectation* that marks all the forceful progressive elements of human life. Woe to that nation that is not eagerly intent on its own future, dreaming dreams that its children will fulfil, building roads along which its children will pass. And woe also to that Church that has not its glance fixed on the future; that does not interpret its needs in the light of the morrow's hope. No glory in the record of her past can possibly save that Church from falling back into all unprogressive stagnation. And Christ taught His followers to look forward by teaching them a new philosophy of history. There would be changes, decay, confusion. Men's hearts would fail them for fear, the powers of heaven would be shaken. But, by it all, they would see the Son of man coming in His glory. The goal of human progress is the realization of the Christ. It is a tremendous thought, a thought so tremendous that no man will ever dare to claim that he has grasped it in its fullness. We can trace in St Paul's Epistles how great it became to him, till, in the fullness of time, he produced that magnificent Epistle to the Ephesians—the summing up of all things in the Christ.

The manifestation was far off then, and the manifestation is far off still, and we cannot always get trace in this history of the purpose of God moving forward unmistakably. Is not the reason of this partly because we have not been alive to the great truth that the Church of Christ is only strong when she looks forward, when she claims and consecrates to the service of Christ all the progressive forces of the world? And therefore we may read in these words of Christ a command to His Church to understand the character of the forces that are at work around her. His disciples were to learn, in that pregnant phrase of Christ, to understand the signs of the times, not to move through life bewildered, helpless, like rudderless ships, but as men, men who understood the natural forces at work around them. They were to ask themselves at every turn, For what larger good are these contests preparing the way? By a tremendous venture of faith they were to understand that behind it all was God, fulfilling the purpose of the Incarnation, reconciling the world unto Himself. Here, and here only, shall we find the true unity of history. What we call secular history is simply human history with this central truth that binds it together left out.

2. So it was the call to the Church *to understand*, and it was the call of the Church *to lead*. For faith is the only true motive power of progress. Depend upon it, the enthusiasm that can translate itself into high enterprise and effort can only come out of a definite creed definitely accepted. Believe that the Incarnation implies and includes the taking up of human life into God; believe that under the baffling enigmas of the world the process even now is going on; believe you are called to help the realization of it, and then you have a motive for effective service, than which no stronger is possible. For the Church which truly believes in the Incarnation must be found in the forefront of human progress, confidently, constantly claiming the future for Christ.

It is the lack of strenuous leadership that is holding back the progressive forces of English social life to-day. No thoughtful man is satisfied with the condition in which we see the world around. We are crying on all sides, What shall we do? Here are hands eager to work, hearts impulsive to feel, and they are waiting for the conquering call. Where is it to come from? 'Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great

glory.' Does not social progress in England to-day wait for the reassertion of the meaning of the Incarnation? Is it not just this thing that will give force and cohesion to the efforts being made all around us to put the possibility of a better and nobler life before men? And so surely it is the call to the Church to hope. We need a revival among us to-day of that magnificent optimism of the Hebrew prophet: 'The waves of the sea rage horribly, yet can they not prevail.'

'These all died in faith, not having received the promises.' Yes, but they looked up through the dimness and rejoiced, for they knew their redemption was drawing nigh. And there is enough in the outlook on the world to-day to shake any optimism founded on less solid foundation than this; with education coming more and more to mean, as it seems, not how to live, but how to get, while large numbers of the population seem to be slipping away from even the outward forms of religion. Has the power of the Christian ideal exhausted itself in the world of to-day? We gather in our Churches and sing:

Thy touch hath still its ancient power,
No word from Thee can fruitless fall.

The truth is we want more hope. It is the children of hope who hold the future in the hollow of their hand. It is not by the orthodoxy of her creed, nor by the splendour of her ritual, nor by the astuteness of her politics that the Church of Christ will win, but by the invincible belief in the conquering power of Christ.

¶ 'Not very far from the city of Glasgow,' says Dr George Morrison, 'there runs a Roman wall which was built by the Romans between the Forth and Clyde, and down in the highland valley at the base of it there sleeps a little village to which I sometimes walk out on Saturday through that beautiful scenery, for it is not all smoke there. Sometimes I think of that wall, which was so fresh and powerful just as John was writing the Apocalypse, and then of the Church, a little hunted thing, and the Empire so imperial and magnificent—how incredible it must have seemed to anybody that the Church should conquer and the Empire die. To-day that wall is a small heap of dust, and the church bells are still ringing there. Despair, if you will, of what is founded on diplomacy and brute force. But never despair of what is founded on the blood of Christ.'

3. What is the *practical value* of the belief in the Incarnation in my own life? It is a tremendous obligation that devolves upon every man who dares to call himself a Christian that he should pause sometimes to ask himself this question. All true education leads up to this goal, for in the life of the individual, as in the life of the world, the process is the same. To each man there comes the call to lead himself out of an easy optimism, to choose not enjoyment but service. And when dissatisfaction and perplexity come down upon our lives, when our dreams are broken and of the temples we have built for ourselves not one stone is left upon another, then lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh. The goal of all true education is consecration to the service of the Christ; that is from the first moment when you looked round the social world in which you lived and said to yourself, This is not the Kingdom of Heaven for which I have been taught to pray, and I must so live here that I may help to answer that prayer. For the redemption of Christ is the leading of the lives of men out of the gladness of enjoyment and content into the gladness of aspiration and hope.

THE PERMANENT IN CHRIST'S WORDS

Luke xxi. 33.—'Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.'

In the day of his doubt John the Baptist sent a deputation to Jesus with the arresting inquiry, 'Art thou he that should come, or, are we to look for another?' The question has repeated itself through all the intervening centuries, and every age asks for itself, 'Is Christ the really final and absolute Word of God to man, and is His message final?' That the question appears and reappears is a testimony to the significance of Jesus among all the guides of the human

spirit, and that He demands again and again to be inquired into. In the mosque of St Sophia, which was once a Christian Church, there had been painted on the wall a picture of the Saviour. But when the Turks took possession of the famous basilica of Constantine, they covered the painting with a coat of whitewash to obliterate the figure of Jesus. The whitewash wore thin, and the glorious face of the Light of the World began to shine through. Again and again it was obscured, but at intervals it has steadily reappeared, so that even the Turks have taken this as an omen of the day when the Lord will come in a second advent to take possession of His ancient place, and fulfil the words 'Christ is King, Christ is Emperor, Christ will reign for ever and ever.' His age fills all the ages.

The story may well be taken as a parable of the text. Making the greatest claim ever made, Jesus claimed for His teaching an immortal life and an imperishable reign: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.' They always shine through. In the mouth of any other teacher or hero, the words would be arrogance and presumption, but with Jesus they are in character, and fall from His lips naturally and consistently. Socrates, the wisest of the ancients, discoursed of Immortality, yet for verification he had to fall back in his uncertainty upon 'some divine word,' which, he said, might come in the future for final assurance. But Jesus is so sure of Himself, that He makes the amazing claim that His words will outlast the heavens and the earth. He will not be superseded. In the Messianic Psalm (72nd), concerning the King of God's Kingdom it is predicted, 'His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed.' Forecast and fulfilment meet upon the head of Jesus Christ.

I

THE HISTORICAL VERIFICATION OF THE TEXT

We ask, Is the statement true to the facts of the case? Can we still call Christ the Light of the World? To begin with, we can say this; in our day the substantial accuracy of the gospel records has been admitted by all competent scholars and thinkers. Even that important person, 'the man in the street,' should know that the long battle over the contents of the Gospels has reached a convincing decision. The late lamented C. W. Emmet, the representative of the finest, and most liberal scholarship of our day, was emphatic in this; his last sermon, which he preached in New York, was based on the testimony that Jesus had the truth and was the Truth, and for those who said that the story of Jesus is a myth, the creation of fancy and legend, the preacher had nothing but scorn. This conclusion should be pressed upon the attention of candid and inquiring laymen, who, having neither the time nor the facilities to learn the facts of scholarship, are often uneasy and doubtful concerning the Faith. But never has the Church in its experts had more assurance of the certainty of Jesus and the things most surely to be believed concerning Him. Emmet's faith was the belief that, 'Jesus still counts,' that He still makes things different, and further, that to the end of time He will be for humanity a great transforming influence. The religion of mankind will be increasingly fashioned by the religious sincerity and certainty of Jesus.'

A decade or two ago there was much uninformed talk about 'pagan Christs,' and so forth, as if some of the heroes and saints of heathendom could be placed on the same plane with Jesus, as if the Light of Asia could be ranked with the Light of the World. That talk has now died down, died, we might say, of sheer inanition. For in the sense the speakers intended, there are no pagan Christs. He is the Alone, and not just another man. Never more than to-day has the uniqueness, the originality and the *aloneness* of Jesus been so surely believed, and the genuineness of the Evangelists' story accepted.

In passing, a word may be said about the *Originality of Jesus*. Artificial difficulties have been raised concerning this, and timid souls have been disturbed when they have been told that in extra Biblical writings there are parallels to His teaching. It is quite true. That the teaching of Jesus is based on 'the distilled essence of the Old Testament' is admitted, and that in His sayings there are echoes of, and even close allusions to, the apocryphal and apocalyptic writings of Judaism, is quite apparent to all

who know these books. But it is to take hold of His teaching by the wrong handle, if we ask, Were all His thoughts and words original in the sense that they had never been used before? In this respect no teacher, philosopher, or inventor was ever original, if we mean that he built straight up from the ground, without regard to what had been thought, said and done by a former age. In them all there are reflections of former modes of thought and faith. It could not be otherwise, nor would it recommend the teaching if it were so. There are always reflections of former modes of faith. 'The way of truth is one, and into it, as a never failing river, flow the streams of thought on either side.' If the Spirit of God is working everywhere and always, we should expect the appearance of gleams of light like the wings of the morning long before the Sun of Glory appears on the horizons of earth. And something of truth, as it is in Jesus, had truly emerged in the visions and dreams of wise and holy men in Israel, and more sparingly beyond its narrrow borders. What Jesus did was to gather up the wavering and sporadic rays of light, and focus them in His own experience of human life. He set them in the light and example of His Personality. And so with Martineau we can say, 'It seems an idle question for sceptical criticism to raise, whether the religion of Jesus comprised in its teaching any element absolutely new? If genius had conceived it all before, life had not produced it till now'.[1] Thus we interpret the foregleams of truths that were to shine in the Gospels. They had all the originality that is worth caring about; and they were embodied in a Personality who touched life with warm, human hands, and walked our earth as Light incarnate, full of grace and truth. Concerning the originality of Jesus, nothing more apt and true has ever been said or sung than Tennyson's lines:

> Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,
> Deep seated in our mystic frame,
> We yield all blessing to the name
> Of Him who made them current coin.

We may now, with confidence, proceed to consider the historical verification of the claim of Jesus that His words would never pass away.

One line of proof is found in the story of the Bible itself. The history of Bible Societies in Britain and America is a wonderful tonic to the faith, and reveals what Principal Cairns calls 'reserves of spiritual force.' What man, after reading some of these records of distribution and circulation of the Bible, does not rise up to say 'I have felt'? For he has seen the statement of Jesus verifying itself. The barest details only can be given here. In his interesting book, *Religions and Religion*, Dr Moulton marshals some of the outstanding results of the range and circulation of the Scriptures. He tells us that the parent Bible Society alone has published the whole Bible or parts of it in 450 separate dialects, versions for the rudest and the simplest, and versions in elaborate literary idioms read by the learned alone. No part of the world is left unrepresented. In Arctic cold the Eskimos have read the Gospels for nearly two centuries in their own tongue, and the hill tribes of India may read the same words that the Brahman studies in Sanscrit. It is no racial faith that inspires the Book, but a world-religion, designed for the world, and already represented in every continent and island. Wherever the book has gone it has uplifted, humanized and civilized the men who have yielded to it, as in the early days the Words of Jesus won the Roman Empire for Christianity. These men are of all sorts and conditions; no part of the world is untouched, and no height or depth of culture. The Bible is the book of otherwise unlettered peasants, but is also the first book in the library of men of genius and men of learning. In the circulation of the Bible, 'God has been writing His own Apologetic.'

In his conclusion Dr Moulton is entitled to ask, Where are the classics of Islam and Buddhism? Where are the great books of secular literature or the expositions of the Rationalist Press compared with the range of the words of Jesus? His words never die; they do not pass away, and, like Himself, they are the Author and Finisher of our Faith. In the story of the world-wide influence of the Bible we are looking on one of the historical verifications of the claim of Jesus. His words can be taken anywhere, and everywhere, to the wise and the unwise. Men turn to them in the deep hours of life; the little child can understand them; the wise man finds there the secrets of Time and Eternity.

[1] *The Ethics of Christendom.*

But further; the words of Jesus have survived all changes; empires and civilizations have passed away since first they were spoken; new conditions of life, new views of the world, new philosophies and forms of thought have risen, but His words have not lost their vitality, and they do not return to Him void. They have survived also all changes in the Church; varying moods of faith have passed over religion, but whatever be the form Christianity has taken, Eastern, Roman, Anglican, or otherwise, at the heart of it, as a vital centre of unity amid diversity, there are the words of Jesus. Many are the varieties of religious experience, but they all unite to say, One is your Master—even Christ.

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes, but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows.

In *Religion and Philosophy in Germany* Heine has paid his own characteristic tribute to the influence of the Bible: 'I owe my enlightenment simply to the reading of a book! One book! Yes, it is a plain old book, as modest as nature, and as simple; a book that appears as work-day-like and as unpretentious as the sun that warms, as the bread that nourishes; a book that looks on us as kindly and benignly as an old grandmother, who with her dear tremulous lips, and spectacles on nose, reads in it daily; this book is briefly called *the* book—the Bible. With good reason it is also called the Holy Scriptures; he that has lost his God can find Him again in this book, and towards him who has never known Him it wafts the breath of the Divine word.' This is true of the words of Jesus, for in His teaching the one supreme and all-embracing revelation is God. If dumb souls in every land could for one brief hour become vocal, and express their feeling for the eternal values, there would rise from the grateful earth the loud Amen to testify to the truth of the text: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.'

II

THE SECRET OF PERMANENCE

When we ask, Why the words of Jesus live, and have outlasted the conditions and the religious climate of the land where they were spoken, we touch the heart of our subject.

(1) *The self-consciousness of Jesus.*—The Imperishable Word stands for Christ, and in it we listen to a revelation of Jesus' faith concerning Himself, as He brooded in loneliness on His mission and work, or met the questionings of men in the crowd. The God-consciousness of Jesus breathes in the text; He knew that He had come from God and was going to God. Other messengers came and had been refused, 'but at last,' Jesus said, referring to His own advent, 'He sent unto them His Son, saying they will reverence my Son.' Undoubtedly, Jesus believed that He had come with a final and absolute message. Such is 'the rock-like certainty of the text.' He knew He had the secret of the Father to unfold, and upon this as a foundation 'the words' rest, upon the authority of Jesus to declare the mind of God.

(2) *The Spiritual quality of the Teaching.*—When we study the Teaching of Jesus, as it is unfolded in the 'Sermon on the Mount,' or in the *obiter dicta* that fell from His lips by the wayside, or in discusssions with the experts of Judaism, we are struck by the absence of what we may call positive rules or particular precepts. He gave few of these, or none, and if we search for merely social, economic, or political forecasts, we are looking for what is not there. He said that His words were spirit, and were life; and that is what they are. 'Instead of framing laws, He stated principles, and made them so few, and broad, and simple that no one could overlook them.' Had Jesus laid down specific rules applying to existing circumstances or institutions, these enactments must have been expressed under the forms and conditions of the environment into which they came, that is to say, they would have been formal, *ad hoc*, precise and particular, and dyed in the colour and language of the time; and, with that time and its temporal conditions, they would have passed away. For every legal code based on temporalities and place tends, in the nature of things, to become obsolete: 'Time makes ancient good uncouth'; the world outgrows it, and leaves it behind. Thus, the Koran, with its minutiæ of precepts and rules, laws of food, of holy places, fasts, and so forth, which might be suitable for an Arab tribe in a certain stage of civilization, is utterly unfitted to be 'the words' of a world-religion, since they apply only to zones of temperature and colour.

Jesus, on the other hand, laid down no legal precepts, but enunciated principles of religion which concerned motives and will—Fatherhood, Love, Reconciliation, Sacrifice and Service. These are not racial or temporal at all; they are truths not of time but of eternity, imperishable words that outlast all temporal things. They have been tested in every religious, social and intellectual climate, and because they are spirit and life, they know no decay, and have proved themselves to be of permanent validity and worth.

(3) *They are fundamental and touch the heart.*—This accounts for the permanent in the words of Jesus. The *cliché*, which deserves a long rest, that the war has changed everything, is more specious than true. The need, the thirst, the yearning after God, the burden of a troubled conscience, the cry for reconciliation with God and with our own soul, the search for power, 'to be the best that we can be,' and the wistful longing to know if there really be any country over the hill—none of these desires of the human spirit has been changed, even if they appear in new forms; they are manifestations of the image in which man was made; Augustine has it, 'O God Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are even restless till they find their rest in Thee'; Dante repeats it: 'In His will is our peace'; and Tennyson, 'Oh for a man to arise in me, that the man I am may cease to be'; and Browning in his aspiration:

And what is that I hunger for but God?
Even from myself
I need Thee and I feel Thee, and I love Thee.
There is that in me
Which turns to Thee, which loves, or which
should love.

These voices do not change. Jesus spoke to what was behind them, and the ear of the restless, inquiring world came out to hear. He did not come to preach a temporal gospel, but to give us God—the God of Jesus; and just for that gift the generations have gathered round Him, believing that He alone has the secret of life—'Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' And it greatly hath sufficed and has made the wingéd words of Jesus imperishable words which will not be left behind. As long as religion lasts men will express the content of it in the words of Jesus.

(4) *They are self-revealing.*—Coleridge used to say that he believed the Bible came from God, because it finds us. The words of Jesus have this sovereign power—they find us. In the days of His flesh, as He spoke to men and women, their heart gave up its last secret to His kind but searching glance. Simeon in the Temple, welcoming the Son to His Father's House said, 'By him shall the thoughts of many hearts be revealed'; Nathanael when he met the Lord said, 'Whence knowest thou me?' and Samaria's daughter confessed a Lord 'who told her all things that ever she did.' His touch has still its ancient power. How often as we read the Gospels, with almost 'uncanny' power a word flies out to lay bare the innermost recesses of work and even of thought, and we stand revealed before the great Revealer.

He lays His finger on the place
And says, thou ailest here, and here.

Such words can never die, for men will return to them from age to age, for self-criticism, to show them all their heart, and for this immortal quality that while the words probe, they also heal. As the records of missionary enterprise tell us, the words of Jesus, often the bare words, without teacher or comment, have redeemed the waste places of life,

Where briers grew 'midst barren wilds
Shall firs and myrtles spring.

For this quality of revealing, seeking and finding love, the words of Jesus will stand against the world. How often has some word of Jesus opened a door of hope for us out of our darkness. Jesus still counts; He still makes life different.

This song shall remain to tell for ever
That when I lost all hope of such a change
Suddenly beauty rose on me again.
Some little word shall light it up again,
And I shall see all clearer and love better.

(5) *His Words save.*—The present writer remembers how that word of Jesus, 'The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost,' found a soldier in France who had wearied out his friends and even himself by sins and faults against which he was powerless.

Good advice, companionship, teaching and vows of amendment were all vain. But the verse we have quoted came to him, we know not how (the wind bloweth where it listeth), and changed everything. The old things over which he had mourned passed away, and a new world came into being. He told us afterwards that he had long felt the desire to come to God, but never had the courage, 'for I was waiting,' he said, 'to have a character to come to God with, not knowing that first of all I had to come to God to get a character.' He had been a rough, ignorant lad, who scarcely knew the alphabet of religion, but this word of Christ coming into his heart burned the baseness out of it, and helped him to express the truth of religion in a way that might have been the envy of the saints. Every guide of souls knows such stories, and, when they happen, they become a far-shining light upon the saying of Jesus that His words are more abiding than heaven and earth. And when 'the dumb hour clothed in black, brings the dreams about our bed,' and a man has turned his face to the wall, unconscious of all the world has to offer, how often it is some word of Jesus, dear, familiar, and half-forgotten, that pierces the gathering gloom; and the man looks up and responds. 'Deep calleth unto deep'—the depth of God to the depths of the soul.

(6) And so we come to the thought that *the words of Jesus are irreplaceable*—'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' There is no other—no substitute. That is what our text really means. It is vain to delude ourselves or others with the thought that in days to come some one will arise to take the place of Jesus. Jesus will not be superseded. Prof. E. F. Scott has said that 'the teaching of Jesus possesses permanent validity because of its inner fruitfulness. His words have proved themselves during two thousand years to be capable of ever new applications. The years between have been sown with the wrecks of social orders and philosophies; one system after another has been transformed, but in each succeeding age men have gone back to these sayings of Jesus, and have found them charged with a living significance. Like no other, His words have shown the capacity of unfolding themselves. There is no reason to doubt that this vitality of the Gospel will continue to be inexhaustible.'

But, we have already said—His words are the effluence of His Personality. The things that Jesus did, and the things that Jesus said, are one in moral consistency, in that Personality which is the great miracle of history. This gives the words their appeal and their sanction. To many teachers it has been objected, We cannot hear what you are saying for thinking of what you are. But Christ is not divided, for behind His words there is the inner Self, holy, harmless, undefiled, and made higher than the heavens. 'Such was the Saviour for us,' for His teaching is the outflow of a life which at every moment was in perfect fellowship with the Father. And thus we say:

God has other words for other worlds
But for this world, the Word of God is Christ.

Two hymns from the Church's praise rise to our lips—His words abide; but Jesus lives and Jesus leads. And to the Captain of Souls, who sets to men their tasks and their warfare, we turn with wholehearted assurance.

Jesus still lead on.

W. M. Grant.

The Judgment of the Son of Man

Luke xxi. 36.—'To stand before the Son of man.'

There is a memorable passage in one of Dean Church's Letters, in which he vividly expresses his sense of the need of deepening in the Church the consciousness of judgment to come. 'Often,' he writes, 'I have a kind of waking dream. Up one road the image of a man decked and adorned as if for a triumph, carried up by rejoicing and exulting friends who praise his goodness and achievements; and on the other road, turned back to back to it, there is the very man himself, in sordid and squalid apparel, surrounded, not by friends, but by ministers of justice, and going on, while his friends are exulting, to his certain and perhaps awful judgment. That vision rises not when I hear just and conscientious endeavours to make out a man's character, but when I hear the loose things that are said—often in kindness and love—of those beyond the grave.'

'To stand before the Son of man.' Christ is

here pointing a contrast between the standards of judgment that claim finality in the world as we know it, and that judgment of men by Himself which He declares to be the goal and destiny of every human life. And this great saying is no isolated instance in His teaching of solemn forewarning about man's future. The Gospels abound in references to His coming, and its significance for men. It is the merest folly to attempt, as some do, to ignore the words of Jesus about the last things: no part of His teaching is better authenticated than that which concerns the End.

Christ leaves unanswered a hundred questions which agitate our minds about the nature of the life of the unseen, where it is to be lived, and how we shall be related to one another in it. He reveals rather something which underlies and dominates the answers to all our curious inquiries, and so makes our attitude, both to the here and hereafter, a matter of vital present importance. After all, for the practical requirements of life, what we need most is not a clear-cut, intellectual creed about the world beyond the grave, but a revelation of spiritual realities. And what can make the spiritual more real to us than this great, simple disclosure of a personal examination of our very selves by Him who offers Himself in His humanity as the supreme standard and living example of what we ought to be? The last word about us is not ours but His.

¶ In his 'Gorgias' Plato describes 'a last judgment at which Minos, naked, should with very soul contemplate the very soul of each in turn immediately after death, "alone, without a kinsman beside him, all the trappings of his life left behind on earth."' That is the philosopher's almost prophetic anticipation of what Christ reveals as an absolute certainty—the bringing of our lives into the presence of His own perfect holiness, and the consequent manifestation of our real characters.

There can be nothing arbitrary or forced about such a judgment. It is as inevitable and final as is the fact of what we are. It is the coming of our very selves out into the perfect daylight of spiritual reality. There we shall see ourselves at last as God sees us, not as we have appeared to ourselves or to our fellowmen. If we think for a moment of human life, we shall see that we are accustomed to 'stand before' other presences than that of the Son of man, and to judge ourselves and to be judged by other standards than His. Broadly speaking there are three *standards of judgment* which we acknowledge and before which we stand every day we live.

1. Each of us knows, first of all, that he stands before *public opinion*. What is public opinion? It is the world's mind about life; the greatest common measure of what men of varied convictions think about something is public opinion about it. There can be no denying the great importance of public opinion to any man's life. But it is none the less true that public opinion, and not least public opinion upon the vital facts of the spirit, is often hopelessly misguided, and always tends to represent standards which are lower than the highest. Men come to think that, if they keep conduct sufficiently straight to avoid the censure of average judgments, they will pass muster at the last reckoning with God.

¶ 'The idea,' says Dr Fosdick, 'that the voice of the people is the voice of God is mostly nonsense. The fact is that in any realm where judgment calls for spiritual fineness only the minority who are above the average are ever right. And because a man is always tempted to live down to the average of his social group, a searching test of character is involved in one's relationship with this dead level of public opinion and practice. A professor in one of our leading universities, questioned as to the peril which most threatens our young men, answered, "Law-morality." He meant that they are content with the legal standard as their ideal. They desire to be no worse than the enforced average, but they feel no call to be any better. They are as good as is necessary to "get by."'[1]

2. Secondly, narrowing the circle and coming nearer to reality, we 'stand before' *our friends*. It has often been pointed out that few guides to a man's character are so significant as his friendships. But that which is the strength is also the weakness of friendship. The verdict of friends is usually too kindly, but it is more likely to be true than that of society.

¶ 'I have a friend,' says A. C. Benson, 'who would be called an unsuccessful man; he has

[1] *Twelve Tests of Character*, 125.

never had time to do his own talents justice, because his energies have always been at the service of other people; if you ask him to do something for you, he does it as exactly, as punctually, as faithfully as if his own reputation depended upon it. He is now a middle-aged man with hundreds of friends and a small income. He lives in a poky house in a suburb, and works harder than anyone I know. If one meets him he has always the same beautiful, tired smile; and he has fifty things to ask one, all about oneself. I can't describe what good it does one to meet him. What a difference he makes to so many people and what a beautiful thing his life is! The other day I met a cousin of his, a prosperous man of business. "Yes," he said, "poor Harry goes on in his feckless way. It's all very well to be always at every one's beck and call, but it doesn't pay." '[1]

3. Thirdly, and coming closer still to the truth, we all 'stand before' *our own self-judgment*. The vital fact in man's moral life is the fact of his conscience. Man is an immortal spirit, made in the image of God, and made for fellowship with Him, from whom he draws that life which makes him what he is. But man is a fallen spirit, and conscience itself is broken and bruised by his fall. Few of us realize that one of our deepest needs is an educated conscience, a conscience purified from the taint of sin. In God's judgment of us there is a court of appeal beyond and above our consciences: and we can see that this must be so, if He is to raise us up to the perfection of His own holiness. St Paul has spoken the last word about our own self-judgment and its unavoidable limitations: 'I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.'

4. Lastly, then, we stand before *the Son of Man*. Not public opinion with its fickle convictions, its shifting standards, and its dishonest compromises; not the partial judgments of friends, who may condone sin in us and refuse to try us by the measure of God; not even the more severe self-scrutiny of conscience, which has been duped into lowering its ideals by bitter failures, and seduced into doubting the plain warnings of the voice of God within. Not these are the final arbiters upon these human lives of ours, but the Son of man upon the throne of judgment, the Jesus of the Gospels, human and Divine, whom the soul sees with opened eyes to be the very God—perfect goodness, perfect holiness, perfect love. He and nothing less than He, He and He alone, is to try my character, my conduct, myself, when out of this world of dreams and shadows into yonder hereafter, where He reigns and there is none beside Him, I pass to be revealed as I am in the awful radiance of His throne.

How shall we prepare to meet Him? He has told us Himself in words which wrote themselves deep in the memories of His disciples, and were burned so insistently into heart and conscience that, recorded in their Gospels, they have become a guide and a beacon to the Church of all time: 'Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.'[1]

[1] *The Silent Isle*, 158.

Day and Night

Luke xxi. 37.—'And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.'

When we take the two parts of the text together, we see how the one balances the other. There is a symmetry about the verse, a fair and proper proportion. It means a life well balanced, well laid out. These are the two sides—the day and the night; the Temple and the Mount; society and solitude; work and prayer; the service of man and communion with God. Christ blended the two, respecting the rights of each, and not suffering the one to diminish or crowd out the other. Each had its proper place in that life of His, like the orderly succession of our days and nights.

'In the day time he was teaching.' But Christ was not always working. He could not be, He had to rest; and He had various ways of resting after His work. How often we find Him going out to Bethany, to the home and the family He loved so well! And Christ found rest also with nature, in the midst of its beauty and its peace. He led His disciples out from the city to the fields; out to Gethsemane and the Garden; out to the desert place—the free open country where there were no villages and no crowds; up to the mountain-top. What a relief when we escape—out by

[1] F. B. MacNutt, *Advent Certainties*, 21.

the sea, or in the wood, or on the hill! It is like passing from the noisy streets into some great cathedral—from the market-place to the mountain-top. There is rest for us where Christ found it—'in the Mount.'

But Christ needed something loftier, nearer, intenser far. He found rest only where He found God. Nature is nothing without God. When the mountain-top became the place of prayer, nearest to God and brightest with His presence, then the soul of Christ was soothed and satisfied and strengthened. He found rest oftenest in prayer; and there can be no rest so worthy of the soul that God has made for Himself.

This, then, was the place of prayer in the life of Christ. It is the place that it should have in our life too. 'In the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out and abode in the mount.' So keeping before us this well-balanced proportion between work and prayer, and the analogy to this in our natural life in the orderly succession of our days and nights, let us take these thoughts as helpful to ourselves.

1. *It is the secret of strength.*—Every day we learn the lesson of our frailty. Whatever strength we have is soon spent and soon lost. It lasts but one short day. In the morning we are strong and fresh, buoyant and equal to anything; but as the hours pass our energies are tamed and quieted. So God teaches us our frailty. So He teaches us to resign ourselves every night into His keeping that He may give us back our strength. He sends us to sleep.

It is a matter of natural law, this need of rest. We work until the evening. And for the mind there is the same necessity to rest a while. When the brain is weary, and thought becomes burdensome, and we lose our fresh interest in things and our command over them, then it is time to stop. We need to learn the lesson God teaches us every night—that our power is renewed, it comes back as we give ourselves into His keeping.

We look upon that ministry of Christ, that life so active, full of enterprise, powerful and fruitful. We wonder, and ask, 'How is it sustained? How does He keep it up?' And the answer is here. Every life like His in the world is fed from the mountain-top. Every ministry that taxes a man's strength to the utmost has behind it this inner life, this upper life of communion with God.

¶ There is a kind of person who scorns to keep what other men call a house of quiet in the soul. They are always amidst the dust of tramping feet. They make no effort to escape from the din of life's crowded and clamorous places, or if ever they leave the clatter and racket of the market-place it is only to plunge into a stream of pleasure and excitement more clamorous still. The things that are seen and temporal have become their meat and drink. They call that, I believe, 'seeing life.' It is nothing of the sort. They may see a lot, these people, but life is the one thing they never see. If you are to see that, to see it in all its grace and beauty, in all its infinite wonder and delicate freshness of surprise, sometime and somehow you must contrive to leave its ranks. You must 'come,' when the Master of Life bids you, 'apart.' You must make time to ascend the hill of the Lord.[1]

2. *It is the secret of calmness.*—Here, too, the night coming after the day has its soothing and saving virtue. The morning hours are the cool, quiet hours; but as the day goes on, the stir and agitation of life is quickened; excitement rises; the strife and fever become fiercer. And when men go beyond the appointed boundaries and turn night into day, we know the kind of life they lead and how they suffer for it. And what would life be if it should go on without pause, a ceaseless whirl and rush without anything to bring us back to calmness and collectedness again? But God sends us to sleep to break the spell and quiet our agitation and restore our souls.

So, too, God gives us our times of religious worship and private prayer. There is a worldly excitement we can hardly hope to escape—the fever of covetousness, the agitation of our anxious cares, the strain and strife of keen competition, the temptation to an interest too quick and absorbing in many things, In many ways it is stirred within us, and it disquiets the soul.

> Calm me, my God, and keep me calm;
> While these hot breezes blow,
> Be like the night-dew's cooling balm.
> Upon earth's fevered brow.

[1] P. C. Pegler, *Wheat and Chaff*, 73.

Calm when the great world's news with power,
My listening spirit stir—
Let not the tidings of the hour,
E'er find too fond an ear.

But there is a religious excitement, too, which is not good. Religious people want to be busy; and while one cannot but honour earnestness wherever one finds it, it is easy to see the danger here—how to clear a space and keep it for more intense and lonely and lofty communion with God! In this day of activity there is danger, if not of doing too much, at least of praying too little. Remember that while work may be depressing for some, it may be rather exciting for others; and the secret of calmness is here. It was after the disciples came back from their first mission, when they had tasted a new experience and wielded an unwonted power—it was then that Christ said to them, 'Come ye apart.'

¶ Our forefathers in the religious life may have had very imperfect ideals of Christian service. They may have tolerated social abuses which we should never tolerate to-day. But they had one element in their religious life in an ampler measure than we have it, and that was the blessed element of silence. What peace there was in the old-fashioned Sabbath—what a reverent stillness in the house of God—what a quiet and leisurely solemnity in the morning worship at the family altar! And if to-day we cannot but be conscious that something of that old spirit has departed, we know that something precious has been lost. It *is* a gain to be immersed in service. It is a high ambition to be strenuous. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.' And yet the Bible never says to us, 'Be strenuous, and know that I am God.' It says, 'Be still, and know that I am God.'[1]

3. *It is the secret of largeness of view.*—This is another blessing that comes to us with the night. It clears the heavens, and floods them with glory and light, and fills them with countless worlds. It leads us out into a universe infinite beyond our little dwelling-place.

As we look up we get new thoughts of the infinite, the unseen, the heavenly; and new thoughts about the earthly too. We get a new conception of size; a new way of measuring things; a new standard of values. Our environment is changed; the conditions of our life are all enlarged and exalted. As God led Abraham out from his tent to look upon the glory of that Eastern sky, so at night God leads us out from the little tent-like world in which we live, that we may know the greatness of His dwelling-place.

In the quietness of life,
When the flowers have shut their eye,
And a stainless breadth of sky
Bends above the hill of strife,
Then, my God, my chiefest Good,
Breathe upon my lonelihood:
Let the shining silence be
Filled with Thee, my God, with Thee.[1]

Surely it is not hard to see how prayer must have upon the soul the same enlarging and exalting influence. It simply sets us in a new world. It changes the conditions under which we live. It brings us into the presence of God and the things that are unseen and eternal; and under this heavenly light we get new views and true views of everything else. It sets everything under a light that is searching and truthful, that reveals everything in its true size and significance.

4. *It is the secret of reality and truthfulness in Christian life and service.*—Surely a man cannot seek the presence of God if he is consciously insincere. A life that is not true is only outward. There is no inner life behind it. It has no moments on the Mount.

Here, too, the analogy holds. The night comes after the day—the quiet time when we may commune with our hearts and be still. It is a time of reflection, a time of reckoning. Memory awakes, and conscience; and the day's life lies clear before us to be judged. In the light of day our interest passes beyond ourselves, and we are taken up with what we see; but in the darkness and the silence and the solitude we are thrown back upon ourselves. Other absorbing interests are broken, and a man has leisure to look in upon himself.

And when a man is thus set by himself, he comes to be singularly free from those influences that tend to hypocrisy. It takes society to make a hypocrite. But with no society but God, and no public opinion but only

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Wind on the Heath*, 172.

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *The Threshold Grace*, 85.

His judgment, it is different. Before God the first question is not, 'Am I good?' but 'Am I sincere?' 'Thou desirest truth.'

¶ In an address delivered at the Glasgow Conference of the Student Christian Movement Lord Grey said: 'Begin when you are young to be honest with yourself about your motives. Unless you have the habit, and keep the habit from the beginning, of trying to be honest with yourself about your motives, you may be quite sure as you get on in life you will lose the power of being honest with yourself, and you will be constantly acting from motives which you would not approve if you stopped to think of them.'

Prayer does test us and make us truthful. It is a kind of reckoning for us; and a man must either stop praying or be honest in his Christian life and service.[1]

Judas Iscariot

Luke xxii. 3.—'Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.'

Judas is a great mystery. There are indeed two mysteries. There is the mystery of his call by Christ. There is the mystery of his career, the strange and perplexing story of his life, and the problem of the motives which prompted his desperate treason.

'Two beings only in this world,' says Papini, 'have ever known the secret of Judas: Christ and the traitor himself.'

1. *The mystery of his call by Christ.*—Judas Iscariot was so named because he hailed from Kerioth. There is a contest between those who identify the town with one so named in the north of Judæa, and those who point to the other Kerioth in the south. He was the only Judæan among the Twelve. There his kinsfolk were, and there were clustered the associations of family and custom which abide more tenaciously than aught else in the heart of a man. The Judæans bore themselves aristocratically towards the Galileans. A Judæan in Galilee had something of the mind and manner that an Englishman had towards the Irish of the south-west.

¶ Lecky made the pregnant remark that the miserable series of blunders the English made in Ireland was due to our conviction that we were dealing with an inferior people. Like the Israelites in the time of Amos, we were very slow in taking a warning. The warning from Ireland has been repeated for seven hundred years: is it not high time we learnt from it how to bear ourselves towards foreigners?[1]

The Galileans were not behind their southern countrymen in feeling the difference, and in letting their own sense of the difference be felt. All this kind of thing, of course, was dissolved as soon as men came within the spell of Christ's company. But we cannot be sure of this in later days, when the Messiah's mission frayed and threatened to part asunder. Then, it is just possible, the reserve and hauteur of the native Judæan in Judas may have stirred again and come to the surface; then, too, it may have been that the native Galilean resentment awoke in the others' breasts, and Judas been made to feel it.

At any rate, this kind of development does occur among the disciples and missioners of Christ. When such a situation develops, there is only one solution and means of healing and heartening it; and that is a rebaptism of all spirits in the love of Christ, a renewal of all 'first loves.' Whenever, in campaigns for God or in His congregations, cleavages occur, or esprit de corps wears thin, you may be absolutely sure that the vision of the one Body whereof Christ is the Head has been obscured, and the living Lord no longer allowed His place.

Well, it was Judas the Judæan whom Jesus called, and made him one of His Twelve. How did He come to select and ordain to His Apostolate this man?

When Jesus called Judas it was because He thought well of him. The choice went wrong; but at first it was right. We don't know what Judas was like at the first; but he cannot have been what he became. Jesus knew what Judas *might* become, but did He know what Judas *would* become? Christ knows what you and I *may* be. The alternatives are limited; they lie between a child going on to sit upon the thrones of glory and a child dropping down the ladder rung by rung to the abyss. So Christ envisaged Judas. He took the risk which the God of the mighty drama in Genesis took when He breathed into Adam, and he became a 'living soul.' He took the same

[1] J. Rutherford, *The Seer's House*, 213.

[1] E. Lyttelton, *Memories and Hopes*, 94.

risk with Peter: a great risk, which, at one point, almost became a tragedy in the Son of God's field of discernment, when Peter proclaimed blasphemously his disloyalty to his Lord. Jesus is prepared to take this risk; it is well for us that He is, else were none of us saved!

But neither at the outset nor at any stage thereafter is there any such domination of personality by Personality as clips those wings of freedom in choice whereby a man may still drop into the ravine again, or, *if he will*, fly upwards to the eyrie of his spiritual destiny. 'Though God be good and free be Heaven,' sings Whittier well:

> Though God be good and free be Heaven,
> No force divine can love compel.

There are those who think that once they have 'joined the Church' and been sealed in Confirmation, all is well, even though they may settle back into the casual ways of the world. This must not be. Remember Judas! In his spiritual career there was a day when he knelt to His Lord in the Galilean springtime, while Christ set His hands upon him, and the heart of Judas sang, ''Tis done! the great transaction's done!' That was the beginning, but look to his end. Each of us requires to go on to 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling,' continuously offering God a heart ready and reconsecrated daily, wherein God may 'work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'

Was Jesus mistaken in Judas? No; not, at least, at the beginning when He called him.

2. *The mystery of his career.*—Judas was appointed to be the treasurer of that First Church of Christ. There was a quality in Judas which prompted Jesus so to designate him; some forceful and businesslike capacity, a mind that was nerved with method, a skill in affairs. It is far from impossible that in this lay the seeds, or some of the seeds, of the noisome crop that sprang up in the soul of Judas in the end.

When Judas became Christ's man, he gave up all for the sake of his liege Lord. He was not behind the others in his surrender of home, business, and all his former liberties. There is no hint anywhere that Judas was less loyal than his fellows in the venturesome 'flights' which Jesus conducted into Phœnicia and the alien territory of Cæsarea Philippi, or that he was less brave and patient in the arduous course that his Lord took, when He marched from His final base on Hermon right through the whole length of the country southward, to plant the standard of His Cross on Zion. It is difficult to believe that it was covetousness, as is widely held, that wrought havoc with Judas' loyalty. A merely covetous man would not have engaged, and continued to persevere, in the rigours of Christ's campaigns as Judas did. Nor can we entertain the idea that Judas was a mere worldling, captured and inspired by mere worldly ambition. It is significant indeed that it was not Judas, but the family of Zebedee, that advanced and uttered a petition for posts in the coming 'government'!

Judas shared the expectations of material empire which possessed the Eleven. The Eleven shared Judas' disappointment. It is easy to detect in the Gospel narrative the worry of mind and the paralysis of will which affected *all* the Apostles, as the mission of Jesus developed in unpopularity. The Lord, well aware of this, turned to the Twelve and spake those words which are only less poignant than the words He uttered in His crucial agony, 'Will ye also go away?' Never, sir, cried Peter, speaking for himself, for John, and also Thomas—speaking, too, for Judas! It is wonderful that only a single one of the band became a complete deserter.

In the dark night Judas slipped away from those friends gathered in the Upper Room, took his way through the ravine, and up the rocky highway to the city. He entered the palace of Caiaphas, not as a huckster bargaining about the price of a slave, but as the ambassador of a prince, 'the prince of this world.'

Said he, I come to you to bring this business to an end; I transfer to you; let me manage it for you! And they struck hands with this dark ally with the white and passionate face, and those fiery and unfathomable eyes. They 'arled' him! And Judas held the silver lightly in his hand, thinking and speaking calmly and deliberately of times and places for the fulfilment of their high engagement.

If, as we saw, neither covetousness nor ambition were the chief motives in this incomparable crime what were they?

Here we enter a confused and fretted field of debate through which we do well to cut our way to what Luke tells us of the matter. He

asserts with a simple gesture that it was Satan who inspired Judas. This is amplified by John. There the invasion by Satan proceeds by two stages. Satan is said to have inspired Judas, and then, at a particular point in the sequence of the tragedy, to have 'entered into him'; as though a captain first made an armistice with the castle, and then moved within the citadel and hoisted his banner there.

So Judas made his allegiance with that Spirit of darkness, of anger, of brooding bitterness and revolt against God which we call Satan.

A big and momentous thing it is when a man chooses the Satanic service deliberately. But what was it that moved Judas to make this choice? We would offer the contention that there were two chief motives in this dark spirit, intertwining the one with the other.

(1) The first was his cavernous disappointment with Jesus. He expected, with all the impulse of his imperial spirit, that Jesus would indeed accomplish that which He was regarded by them all as there in Galilee and Jerusalem to do, but did not do—a blazing and boundless achievement in regal glory of God's Rule in the earth. He waited and pined for that. He bore hardships which to the men of the lake were little beyond the perils and privations of their daily life, but which meant more to this Judæan. He went homeless in alien and desert regions. But his restive and brooding spirit consoled itself in these endurances and strange delays with the assurance that all would yet come right! When it all went wrong, more and more egregiously wrong, the soul of Judas turned to ice against his crumbling idol. There possessed him that 'deadly coldness,' which A. C. Bradley detects in Iago.

If we desire to have a glimpse of what moved in the soul of Judas we may find it in Prince Mammon's speech, which shows the venom of his disappointed heart.

> Christ, when he might have driven his message straight
> To the heart of Rome, stood silent, in a stupor,
> Stunned like the prophet's sheep before the shearers:
> Soul of the Universe, what a chance he missed!
> Cæsar himself, thrice proven, wise as time,
> Flung all away, declining royal honour.
> . . . He lost the world,
> Through fear to lose it: had he crowned himself,
> Conspiracy could scarce have breathed an hour
> In presence of the courage and the deep
> Resource betokened in the mighty act;
> Or if the Ides of March had seen the end,
> He then had done the thing for which he died.[1]

(2) What was the second chief motive in the soul of Judas? This second motive has been detected and defined with much skill by Theodor Keim of Zurich in his *Jesus of Nazara*.

It harks back to the Judæan origin and spiritual equipment of Judas. Judas is now among his own people, in all probability in contact with old associates, hearing their judgment on this Galilean invasion, and having difficulty in meeting their sceptical estimate of the future of Jesus. What could he say to those who talked with a remote pity, but with a somewhat scornful distrust as well, of the Nazarene's withered mission, His evaporated 'signs and wonders,' and His impracticable morality? All this was a reverberating echo of the doubt that brooded in Judas's own mind. The glorious temple towered above his soul, and awoke all the romantic reverence with which every patriotic Jew was natively endued.

What chance had Jesus against this queenly city of Jerusalem, this rock that drew these millions of pilgrims who were now assembled about the everlasting springs that gushed from it year by year at the Feast? This Jesus had become no better than a ghost, His discarnate piety a vagrant dream. Judas felt he had wasted these three fevered years. 'Sweeter than the marriage-feast' of the Nazarene's disembodied fancy it was to Judas, to find himself in Jerusalem, the perpetual city of his soul, to be at rest again. . . . This it was that landed him—a disillusioned soul in the midst of Christ's towering and contemptuous foes!

Is there nothing in this that we can appreciate in some small part? As followers of Christ in the world have we never in any measure whatever felt some lightest airs in our soul of this great tempest that swept Judas away? Let each of us answer for himself! But this that perverted Judas appears to me to be the greatest danger in the world still for those who have saluted Christ as their Lord, and in their earlier years struck hands in a covenant with Him.[2]

[1] John Davidson.
[2] A Boyd Scott, *The Twelve Take Stock of Us*, 124.

The Guest-Chamber

Luke xxii. 11.—'Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?'

Jesus had His public company of friends—the Twelve whom He had selected and called to office as a minister forms his cabinet, as a commander appoints his generals. With them He travelled through Galilee, with them He appeared in Jerusalem. He instructed them in the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; He gave them directions for its conduct. They were to be the first exemplars of the Christian faith and the pioneers of the Christian enterprise. Some of these might be more congenial to Jesus than others—one was His intimate; but He called them all friends. The Twelve will ever be associated with Jesus; they are the college of the Apostles, the missionaries of the Cross. But as one reads the Gospels, other persons emerge like pictures from the shadow in a gallery, like unaddressed letters in a biography, like initials in a diary. They are persons of whom we only get glimpses, or whose acquaintance with Jesus is barely mentioned—such as Nicodemus, who visited Jesus by night but who was soon afterwards Jesus' friend; and Joseph of Arimathea of whose intercourse with the Master we know nothing, but who was so devoted to Him that when Apostolic hearts had failed he gave Jesus a tomb in his own garden. And then there is this unknown, whom we can only call 'the goodman of the house,' who rivalled Joseph of Arimathea in the offices of friendship. The one received Jesus to his most sacred place after the Passover was complete. The other afforded Him his choicest room wherein to keep the feast.

All the days of His ministry the Son of man was a homeless wanderer—had not where to lay His head. When He came to Jerusalem He would always be welcome at the house of His friend Lazarus of Bethany. It appears, however, that He did not lodge there during the Passion Week. Perhaps it was that, aware how Lazarus was implicated with Him, He would not further exasperate the bloodthirsty rulers against that dear home by making it His abode. At all events, during this last sojourn at the capital, He repaired each evening to the Mount of Olives and passed the night in the Garden of Gethsemane, couched on the dewy sward and sheltered by the olive-trees.

He had no dwelling in Jerusalem, and this embarrassed the Twelve as the high solemnity drew near. It was necessary that Jesus should have somewhere to gather His disciples and eat the Passover with them; and on the morning of the Preparation-day they approached Him and enquired: 'Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?' He was at no loss for He had already arranged the matter.

1. A more winsome idyll than the story of the Upper Room is not to be found in the Gospels. How Jesus came up with the multitude to keep the feast, knowing that He Himself would be the Passover Lamb. How He was suspected, slandered, maligned, harassed all the holy week. How, while the poorest of the people had a room of some kind in which they could celebrate the great deliverance, He, of whom it all spoke, had no roof above His head.

Oh, height of human madness! Wonder rare,
No place for Him, without Whom no place were.

How He was not concerned or dismayed, but gave directions to His disciples as if every house in Jerusalem were open to Him. How He spake as if there were an understanding between Him and some secret acquaintance they did not know. How two of the disciples went full of curiosity to a public fountain and looked for a man carrying a pitcher of water. How he gave no sign at seeing them, but immediately arose and went his way. How they followed without hesitation till he came to a certain house and turned to face them at the door. How they asked the question that Jesus gave them, and were taken at once to a room prepared for the purpose. How they departed and returned to Jesus much wondering. The secret communication between the goodman of the house and the Master, the appointed rendezvous in a place where people were coming and going, the carefully chosen password, the loyal devotion of an unreckoned disciple, are a romance, such as we mostly read of in ancient days, when Royalists declared by stealth their devotion to some hidden and disguised monarch.

One may be sure that behind this simple

mystery—the necessity of evil days—lay a better romance of friendship. One day this man, a wealthy and intelligent citizen of Jerusalem, after the type of Nathanael most likely, had heard Jesus preach, and his heart was stirred as when the wind bloweth on the face of the waters. He went alone and quietly to Jesus—not because he was afraid, but because there are people who will not expose their soul to the multitude—and they understood each other in a moment. Wherever it was possible they met—Jesus and His nameless friend. When they were separated by distance and circumstances, they thought and felt together.

While the rulers were trying to ensnare Jesus by their false questions, and the silly people were chattering about His claims, Jesus' friend was considering how he could help Him.

'What can I do for my friend?' the goodman of the house would say to himself. 'Let me give Him a chamber wherein He may keep His great Passover, and one house in Jerusalem to be His own for the last night.' One would like to know how Jesus looked when His friend made this offer. For once He had been understood; for once He would be satisfied.

Certain good deeds receive their wages in the daytime, and certain must wait till set of sun; but some have their due recompense both in this world and in that which is to come, and to this twice-blessed class belongs the hospitality of Jesus' nameless friend. He was not himself present in the room, nor would he expect to be admitted to the fellowship of the Holy Apostles. It was enough for him to keep watch without and take order that Jesus be not disturbed for this brief hour before His death. As Judas left, he would see through the open door the perfect peace of Jesus' family, and St John's head on Jesus' breast. He would catch the low, sweet sound of Jesus' voice as He spake in the Holy Sacrament, and perhaps from his place he joined in the hymn they sang before Jesus went out to Gethsemane.

This room was now a sacred place—no longer for the common uses of life, but to be kept for the Lord, if haply He should return, and His friends. When the disciples crept from their various lodgings on the first day of the week, they made as by an instinct for the goodman's house, and were not surprised to find him waiting in the shadow of the door. He knew that they would come, and, as is the way in our deeper hours, he led them without a word to the Upper Room. But this favoured room was to receive yet higher honour, for here—the doors being shut—the Risen Lord appeared in their midst and said, 'Peace be unto you.' It might well seem that the using of his room were enough reward, but Jesus had still something in store for His friend. The last time they met beneath the olives the goodman had pledged Jesus to come to his house before He went to the Cross, and then before they parted Jesus would pledge the goodman to visit Him in His house after he was done with earth. As a monarch in a foreign land Jesus had received ungrudging hospitality; now it was His opportunity to pay the debt in His own country, and one loves to think of the meeting.

2. Jesus still comes to each of us hoping for hospitality. He still comes to the door of our soul and that man is blessed who receives the Lord into his guest-chamber.

Behold, I knock! Methinks if on My face
Thou wouldst but rest thine eyes,
Wouldst mark the crown of thorns, the sharp
nails trace,
Thou couldst not Me despise!
Thee have I yearned for with a love so strong,
Thee have I sought so earnestly and long;
My road led from a cross unto this place;
Behold, I knock!

(1) *Jesus is the best of all the guests who visit the human soul.*—It is with the soul as with a house in this matter of hospitality. Houses there are where no fire is lit in the guest-chamber from January to December, where no generous feast is placed upon the board, where there is no kindly excitement on the threshold, because no guest ever rests beneath that roof. The coming of guests revives and enriches the common life, for each one has his own tale to tell. His presence in the house is an inspiration; something has been left behind, the effect of another individuality which leaves its trace on the household, and a subtle fragrance, as when sandalwood has lain for a while in paper, or rosemary among clothes. More grateful still must be the strangers who come in the spirit, and visit our souls, the masters who, being dead, yet live for ever in

their books and works. How dreary and unwholesome must be the mind whose blinds are ever drawn, whose door is ever locked, while the sunlight beats on the roof and the merry crowd sing in the street. How favoured and content must be the mind where the prophets of God come, not as strangers, but as friends that have their appointed room, and use the passwords of the house. But among all the spiritual guests that cross our threshold, Jesus is not only incomparably the best by the excellence of His Divinity, but also the most intimate by the presence of the same Divinity. He wrote no book. We do not merely read of Him—He speaks to us; we do not merely learn His thoughts—we come to know Himself. We make Him the confidant of our secrets, but in the end He tells us things about ourselves we have not known. His presence is an irresistible condemnation of wrong-doing, a perpetual inspiration of well-doing. He joins Himself as by an accident to men on the ways of life, and afterwards makes as though He would go farther. When they constrain Him to abide, it does not matter whether the soul be as a palace or a cottage He will enter.

The house is not for me, it is for Him.
His Royal thoughts require many a stair,
Many a tower, many an outlook fair,
Of which I have no thought, and need no care.
Where I am most perplex'd, it may be there
Thou mak'st a secret chamber holy—dim,
Where thou wilt come to help my deepest prayer.

(2) *When any one receives Jesus as a guest, he ought to give Him the Upper Room.*—For it happens that there are fashions in this matter of spiritual hospitality; and though they are all well intended, they are not all equally successful. Some receive Jesus in the public room where the work of life is done, and He will not despise their laborious service. Some pay Him court in that austere room where the accounts of life are kept and audited, and Jesus has not come to belittle their obedience who are of St James's righteous kind. But there is something higher than law. Some delight to see their Master in the room that is lined with books of ancient learning, and Jesus hath a tender regard for the St Pauls that must know the mysteries of His Person. Yet is there something far above theology. For some have not been content to hold Jesus anywhere save in the room which is nearest to the sky, which has windows to the grey east and the golden west, and all day long is full of warm light. This is sometimes called St John's room, because he wrote pleasantly about it and the things he had seen from its windows; and no one will gainsay that it is the Upper Room. For work is good, and righteousness is good, and knowledge is good, but best of all is love. Love is Jesus' chosen guest-chamber, and he that has Jesus for a guest has power, and goodness, and truth, and God.

(3) *Jesus needs a large Upper Room, for it is His habit to travel with a band of friends.*—He did not like to be alone in His life, save when He separated Himself for a space, and retired into the secret place of God. His delight was to gather congenial men to His side, and travel in the paths of life with them. He shared the round of human experience with His disciples, except certain last trials which He kept for His own special share, and revealed Himself to them so familiarly that they have given us a likeness of Him more precious than all the books in the world. During the centuries He has been ever adding to the number of His friends with a very wide charity, and now He seeks hospitality for a large company. Any one who gave a feast to Jesus in Galilee had to count on twelve disciples also; but he were a shrewd calculator that could now estimate the number of His following. There are those who would fain have Jesus without His friends. There are those whose guest-chamber is so small that they think it impossible to squeeze in the disciples however much they desired, in which case it is high time they were building a wider, airier Upper Room; and perhaps there may be those who would stand at the lower door and discriminate—admitting one and refusing another. They do themselves an injury that have likes and dislikes among the friends of Jesus. Our wisdom, to say nothing of our charity, is to show hospitality to every one who has lived with Jesus, for so will come to our lowly roof, not only St John and St Paul, but also Thomas à Kempis, St Francis, George Herbert, John Bunyan, Samuel Rutherford, Archbishop Leighton, and many others of various creeds, but of one Love. They will be acceptable guests, and this curious thing will

come to pass, that with every new guest our room will grow larger, until at last it will seem as if our poor guest-chamber, like that of the 'goodman of the house,' held the whole Church of God.

(4) *Jesus is satisfied with very simple furnishing.*—This is plain if anyone will take an inventory of the 'goodman's' room. A ewer full of clean cold water at the door, that the feet soiled on life's journey may be cleansed before entering into the Divine fellowship. There must also be a towel that, after the Master's example, proud disciples may be compelled for shame's sake to lay aside their highmindedness and learn to serve. Purity and humility go far to make a fair chamber for Jesus, and one other thing only is needed—faith. The goodman provided a table, but he left it to Jesus to send the feast, and Jesus ever desireth the empty soul that He may fill it with His grace.

¶ In the refectory of San Marco of Florence there is a very pleasant picture wherein St Dominic is seated at table with his monks, and he is asking a blessing over cups that have no wine and platters without bread. His companions are amazed, but even while the saint is praying the angels of God are moving unseen through the room, carrying that bread of which if any man eat he shall never hunger again. For it cometh to pass in this hospitality that if any one furnisheth a chamber for Jesus he shall find he is the guest, and Jesus has become the Host.[1]

The Lord's Desire

Luke xxii. 15.—'With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.'

'THE feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover,' a great time in every Jewish house, and to Jesus and His disciples this particular Passover was to be full of special significance. The usual preparations were made, but every incident mentioned in the narrative heightens the sense of solemnity. There were deeper preparations, no doubt, than those made by Peter and John when they went to the goodman of the house with the message: 'The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?' We are made to feel the elements of tragedy as the story unfolds—how, when the time of the feast drew nigh, malice and hatred reached a climax without, and treachery within. 'And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.'

The Passion had begun. The strange combination we find in the word 'passion' as meaning both a great flame of love and a fierce flame of suffering has never been so illustrated anywhere as in the Passion of our Lord. It was desire and anguish, sweet and bitter, love and suffering. When the hour was come and He sat down at the prepared feast, He said: 'With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.'

There is fathomless depth of love in it, and the fathomless mystery of sorrow. The feast was the prelude to the suffering, and yet He desired it. Nay, we can say that the feast was the prelude to the suffering, and *therefore* He desired it. For that way of the Cross whose shadow lay athwart His steps was the way of the Father's will and the way of redemption. We are made to feel that this was a new Passover of which the old was merely a dim and shadowy emblem. In this new Passover the victim is himself the priest, and the redemption achieved is something profounder than the release from Egypt. The disciples do not understand the full solemnity of the hour and the act. They had been concerned about arrangements and some even were squabbling about precedence, but they are made to feel at last something of the awe in the Master's heart.

Why did He desire with such eager, ardent longing to eat this special Passover with them?

1. *For His own sake.*—'Before I suffer.' There was comfort to His own heart that He should be able to manifest His love. With tender, solemn thought He had looked forward to it, and He desired the support of their fellowship for what lay before Him. We think of our Holy Communion as representing the satisfaction of our desire, and it is so. It typifies to us all the strength and comfort of our faith, all the gifts of the Father's love. We think of what it means to us that fellowship with God is possible—support in temptation,

[1] J. Watson, *The Upper Room*, 4.

strength in weakness, comfort in sorrow, forgiveness of sin. It is mostly the satisfaction of our desire we think of, and this is natural, but it is also and first of all, the satisfaction of His desire—the love that is never weary of giving, but can find no rest until it finds opportunities of giving. If we have ever sought God, it is because He has first sought us.

God loves to be longed for, He longs to be sought,
For He sought us Himself with such longing and love;
He died for desire of us, marvellous thought!
And He yearns for us now to be with Him above.[1]

If with any sort of desire we have desired communion, it is because with a deeper desire He has desired it. God is far more willing and eager to give than we are to receive. The Master here desired to eat this Passover with His disciples before He suffered, for His own sake, for the satisfaction of His own love, for the support of His own soul as He went to the last act of His Passion. It is the nature of such love as His to desire this. So that, until we respond to the love of God, we are not only depriving ourselves of the best blessing, but we are also robbing God. We are refusing a love that desires with great desire. Can even the Lord's Passion be said to be accomplished so long as He has this cross on His heart, so long as we refuse to let Him give Himself?

2. *For their sake also.*—The final act of suffering would be a great trial to the disciples. They were to know something of the sorrow of desolation, and Christ was eager to prepare them for that dark future, and make them know that His very death was a manifestation of His love. He wished to comfort them with His presence, and to lead them gently into the deep things. If they were assured of His deathless love they would find comfort when the shock of His death came. They could look back on this feast and on these words, and gather strength to suffer and to wait. And so it is for us also who are His disciples. Our feast of love not only represents the desire of the Lord to give Himself, but represents the joy of the gift to us. 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover *with you*.' This manifestation of love is for our comfort and strength, and we, like the disciples, can use the occasion to prepare us for what lies before us. There may be trial, burdens heavy to be borne; there may be suffering for us as for Him; there must be death one day. And before such happenings it is surely a comfort and strength for us also to become sure of the love of God in Christ.

(1) *In sorrow* there is no other way of permanent comfort. We may learn to bear and harden ourselves for the blow, but there is no issue into peace that way. There is sorrow too deep for surface healing, and the heart that alone knows the heart's bitterness needs inward remedy. Only the assurance of God's love can do for us what we need in the desolate hour, and we take our Communion as speaking to us of the desire of God's love on our behalf. The love that takes us by green pastures and quiet waters is with us also in the dark valley of the shadow. To be sure of God's love is to be content even in the night of sorrow; for the day will break and the shadows flee away.

He is not far away:
Why do we sometimes seem to be alone,
And miss the hands outstretched to meet our own?
He is the same to-day,
As when of old He dwelt
In human form with His disciples—when
He knew the needs of all His fellow-men,
And all their sorrows felt.

Only our faith is dim,
So that our eyes are holden, and we go
All day, and until dusk, before we know
That we have walked with Him.[1]

(2) Or *in temptation* there is inspiration in this same thought. Nothing will enable us to stand up under the fierce moral trial of life, except this assurance of God's interest in us and His highest desire for us. We cannot escape temptation—it meets us in the face, it creeps up behind us, it plucks us on this side and on that. The life of moral man is the tempted life. So insistent and persistent is temptation that alone we have no chance of victorious resistance. But when we are not alone, when we know ourselves reinforced by all-conquering love, the impossible becomes possible. Prepare

[1] Faber.

[1] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 89.

yourselves for every temptation that can meet you by strengthening yourselves at the Holy Table. To be sure of our Father's interest and love is bread and wine that can feed the hungry soul and support it in the fiery trial of temptation.

(3) Or take the doleful mother of both sorrow and temptation, *sin*, what possibility of escape is there except here in what Communion stands for, the compassionate, forgiving love of God? That He should desire to give us His love, to give us Himself, is our only hope. We are like lost sheep that have wandered out of the way, and lost we must remain if the Good Shepherd go not to seek and to save the lost. If there be no passion of desire in His heart to save, we cannot save ourselves. Our Communion speaks to us of His desire. It is because He desired it with such intensity that He suffered and that He made this Passover a pledge of His desire before He suffered. The simple symbols of our feast mean for us forgiveness, cleansing, renewed strength—all to deal with this tragedy of sin that mars our life.

If the Saviour with desire desires to eat this Passover with us, shall there be no corresponding desire in our heart? Will there be no answering response? It is all He asks for—desire. If we come humbly because we need, He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him. It is not only that He gives gracious gifts for our need in sorrow or temptation or sin, and not only that He gives love, but also that He gives Himself. When we can say, 'There is none on earth that I desire beside thee,' we are on the way to be satisfied.

Sorrow and Sympathy

Luke xxii. 15, 41.—'And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed.'

1. *Sympathy.*—The life of Jesus had been a life of suffering and sorrow. Joy, deep and unbroken, there had been; but perhaps the sorrow had been keener and more manifest. We can never know what it cost that pure soul to pass through a world, where, at every turn, He was met by sin and misery. He suffered because of the sin of others. His soul was full of sympathy, and through sympathy sorrow entered in. He had now reached the darkest hour of His life—Gethsemane was near. The weight of the world's sin was heaviest now. The clouds were gathering angrily, and soon it would be the midnight of suffering.

Now He who had strengthened many a suffering soul with His sympathy asked for it in return. At the end He snatched an hour for one last meal with His friends. There is infinite meaning in it. With desire had He desired to eat that meal *with them* before He suffered. Into that suffering He was to enter alone; but He would be with His friends to the last moment possible. Up to the last He asked for human sympathy. Soon He would be standing where it could not come, but till then He would cling to it. He was the strong Son of God—strong with the strength of a stainless life, strong with the strength of God—but right up to the end He leaned on human sympathy. It helped Him to feel the beat of loving hearts. They were sinful, erring men; they knew not truly what was coming; but in their hearts there was the dull foreboding of a coming grief, and their souls were filled with a mute sympathy and a love they could not express.

> The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,
> But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams:
> Alone the sun arises, and alone
> Spring the great streams.

It was not so with Jesus Christ, who in the tensest moments chose to have some of His friends beside Him, felt that their presence there, and their uncouth fumbling sympathy did not jar, but that it helped. And yet they were so queer a little company, these men so dear to Jesus Christ! How dull and material in the make-up of their minds they were—even after the Resurrection, we are told, they were asking hopefully about some earthly monarchy on which their hearts still ran. Yet He never struck His hands together in a sudden flash of anger—His patience, long worn, at last fairly broken through—crying with heat, or in despair, 'Away back to your homes, you who have not a touch of spirituality in your whole composition, who will not see, and are too dense ever to understand!' Often enough as we read, with our faces flushing at the poor show they are making, we watch for some such outburst. But it never comes; nor did it ever enter

Christ's mind so to judge them. What struck Him was their loyalty, and the risks that they were running for Him, and how much He owed them for the difference that their friendship had made. They trooped into the Upper Room, like sulky children; upon the road they had been arguing angrily within earshot of Christ, who had the biggest claim upon Him, who had made the heaviest sacrifices upon His behalf, and stormy voices raised unguardedly had reached Him clearly, 'You on the right hand and the left hand, indeed! And why you? You and your tarry bits of boats! And what about the business that I left, worth ten of yours?' Yet when He prayed for them, it was not a desperate cry for forgiveness that He offered. He thanked God for them, looked at them very lovingly, told them how grateful He was, and would always be, for all that they had been to Him; proud of them, who had stood by Him in all His temptations; and had helped Him, far more than they knew, by their sympathy and faith.[1]

Surely this craving of our Lord's for sympathy should teach us the value of it. There are those who shut their hearts against sympathy, who refuse either to give or to receive. But theirs is not the richest, fullest life. And one of the saddest sights is that of a man or woman out of whose life sympathy has been crushed by sorrow. Some sorrow has come, and they have borne it alone, too proud, too self-reliant, or, perhaps for the moment, too brave to reveal it. They have, as they think, conquered their sorrow. Then comes the great mistake—they think that all others should do likewise, and that sympathy is needless and weak. They have deprived themselves of all power of sympathy. The truest friendship cannot now be theirs, unless they rise from the dead. They can no longer understand their friends, as to understand we must suffer with—we must be touched with a feeling of their infirmities.

Surely Christ is right, and humanity makes progress only as it widens its sympathies, and enlarges its interests. Dostoievsky in one place declares that the only thing that civilization has done for us is to increase our sensibility, our capacity for pain, the pain that comes from sympathy; and wishes plaintively that he were an insect, and so safe from the pangs that his human nature brings him. And, in truth, many of us are insects, nothing more. Your selfish man can only be hurt in his own person, and is fairly secure. He has so small an area to guard. But as we rise in the scale of being, this vulnerable surface becomes ever larger. We can be wounded now in our wife, our children, our family, our friends. And God's plan seems to be that the circle of those who matter to us, and through whom we can be injured, should widen out and out, till it is co-extensive with humanity. 'Agonies are one of my changes of garments,' says Whitman; 'I do not ask the wounded person how he feels. I myself become the wounded person. And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy, walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud.'

When our Lord stands and asks, 'What wilt thou that I should do for you?' let us have the wit to answer, 'Lord, that my eyes may be opened,' that I may see the pain and sorrow in the world, may have to feel it, and to make it mine.

¶ 'Let us be kind to one another,' Ian Maclaren used to say, 'for most of us are fighting a hard battle.' And years afterwards when I succeeded to a charge once his, I found out how bonnily he had lived out his dictum; heard nothing of his sermons, though he was a mighty preacher; but, wherever there had been a bairnie ill in his time, twenty years after they remembered in these homes the man who spent long hours pouring out wonderful stories to hot, restless little folk, too ill to look at pictures, sick of all their toys, or peevish and fretted by their crumby beds.[1]

2. *Alone.*—Is there a place where human sympathy cannot enter? Perhaps so. But there is a Friend who can enter every room of suffering. Why? What enables Christ to go farther than any other friend? This—'He was parted from them about a stone's cast.' The arrow of suffering was to enter His inmost heart. But the barb in that arrow was the intense loneliness of the suffering. Into Gethsemane He must go alone. Hitherto He had been strengthened by sympathy. But the supper had been the setting of the sun and afterwards there was nothing but the midnight of loneliness. 'Gethsemane denied our Lord all human sympathy.'

The Son of man has taught us that there is a

[1] A. J. Gossip, *From the Edge of the Crowd*, 100.

[1] A. J. Gossip.

sorrow that must be borne alone. And this is the deepest sorrow, as no human hand can alleviate its pain. We must keep it from our friends, 'lest loving hearts should break for our relief.' They must not know it—it would blight their lives. Though they know it not, as they peacefully sleep, we are parted from them about a stone's cast—so near, yet so far—so far, for we have crossed the invisible border of the land of suffering. There we think of them, suffer for them, but they cannot come to us. We must bear it alone 'smiling the while.'

Truly we are called to fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ. We, too, can and must drink of the cup that He drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with. The path to glory for the Son of God lay through the valley of suffering, and up the hill called Calvary. 'If any man serve me, let him follow me.'

And we should not shrink from this communion of suffering, for of it has come all the highest good of man. Out of Gethsemane came salvation. And out of the Gethsemane of your life will come your soul's richest health. Out of it, too, will come blessing to your friends, though they may not know it. We must bear our burden, and in much we shall have the help of sympathy, but there is a sorrow we must bear alone.

Gethsemane
Denied our Lord all human sympathy,
And deepest grief
Is that we bear alone for others' sake,
Smiling a while, lest loving hearts should break
For our relief.

3. *With Christ.*—But this is not all. We have found that there is a place where earthly sympathy cannot enter, but that there is a Friend who can enter every room of suffering. And we see now why He can. It was true of Him that He stood alone, and therefore it is not true of us. We cannot now be quite alone. In Gethsemane He mastered suffering, He learnt its secret, and so gained the right to stand within the shadow of every sorrow. Since then sorrow has lost its sharpest sting, its intensest loneliness. By standing alone with grief and *by bearing it*, He has comprehended it; and now His heart is one of exhaustless sympathy. So we may stand in a Gethsemane where no earthly friend can follow us; but there always will be standing by us one like unto the Son of man. 'In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.'

So Christ came not only to suffer *with*, but also to suffer *for*. He suffered for us, and so we are saved from the deepest pain. He was parted from men about a stone's cast, that ever afterwards He might live with them in closest sympathy.

And, after all, how human is the sympathy! He was the Son of man. Human sorrow has entered into the heart of God; it was the sympathy of God with man—God suffering with man. And now for evermore man and God are one, united by the bonds of an eternal and a suffering love.

Such is the crowning of Love's sacrifice. Such shall be the crowning of our sacrifice—out of deepest sorrow shall come deepest, fullest life.

O hearts that faint
Beneath your burdens great, but make no plaint,
Lift up your eyes!
Somewhere beyond the life you give is found;
Somewhere we know by God's own hand is crowned
Love's sacrifice.

Our Common Life

Luke xxii. 19.—'He took bread.'

THERE are many persons, who, whether from their infrequent communions or from some ancient superstition that still lingers, have formed the habit of lifting the Lord's Supper out of connection with their everyday life. It is right that we should regard the memorial of facts so Divine with more than usual seriousness of feeling, and that we should prepare for it with a very earnest discipline. But how many, who do this with all honesty as the feast comes round, fail to carry away from it any influence for the rest of their lives? Are we not all tempted to treat the Sacrament as a special and occasional means of grace, which demands from us at the time unusual adoration

and effort to purify our hearts, but which has no practical effect upon the intervals of life between its celebrations?

Very different was the intention of Christ Himself in instituting this sacrament. It is true that what He embodied in it were the highest and most awful mysteries of His gospel—His wonderful Incarnation and His mysterious Atonement on the Cross. But while it is these unique and awful events that Christ brings us to celebrate in the Sacrament, He brings them near to us, not in signs of the glory and the terror in which they were enacted, but in signs which express their common and daily usefulness to our lives. 'He took bread,' and 'He took wine.' That is to say, He chose two materials of daily use to be the symbols of the central facts of our salvation—two materials which man employs for his common and regular nourishment.

¶ Lady Glenconner in her delightful book, *The Sayings of the Children*,[1] tells how one day at luncheon time she noticed her little son, 'who was sitting near her, suddenly bend his head, and under the table in his lap she saw his two hands quickly put together, and as swiftly part again. It was so instantaneous that she was hardly sure she had the true impression, so she whispered:

"What were you doing then?"

"I just quickly asked for forgiveness."

"Why?"

"Because I dropped bread."

His mother could say no more then, because there were many present, and this passed in whispers, but it set her thinking, and she traced it to having once told the children that we should never misuse bread, or dishonour it, that we should pick it up if we saw a piece fall lest it should be stepped upon, because it had been taken once as a great symbol.'

'I am the bread of life,' Christ says. The bread of life does not mean what will stimulate us to a more than ordinary strength of devotion to Him—a strength which is only to diminish again towards another communion. The bread of life is the bread we are to live by to-morrow and the next day and all the next; the bread in the strength of which we are to get through our business, resist temptation, grow strong in character, rich in enthusiasm, steadfast in will.

[1] Page 39.

Thou wert broken 'mongst the dead
That our hunger might be fed
Even with common daily bread.

Whence in things both great and small
Life should be transfigured all
To a high church festival.

Not with host to be adored
But with each man's daily board
Counted holy to the Lord.[1]

How many of us have no idea what Christ means by being the Bread of Life, simply because we have not first of all asked ourselves what we wish life itself to be! If life be for us, what it is for so many, something out of which is shut not only what is God-like, but even the higher human affections—in which aspirations after truth and purity are regarded as impossible, and aspirations after unselfishness as misleading—in which we take no more interest in our fellows than our curiosity or our avarice excites—in which we cannot know God as our Father, because we fear Him only as the incalculable force that may disappoint our selfish hopes—in which we cannot know our fellow-men as brethren, because we only recognise them as our rivals for the good things and the snug places of the world—then we have no need of Christ, and His offer of Himself as the Bread of our lives will fall meaningless on our ears.

But if life for us be otherwise: if we choose to see life in its largest meanings, and lay upon our hearts its real responsibilities; if life be to us the power to grow away from sin, to stand through temptation and to wear down adversity; if it be the recovery of failure, and the healing of wounds, and the courage against death; if, still higher, we have known that we come from the Father, who has made His image our ideal, and our destiny the perfect performance of His will; if we feel how far we are from that image, and how terribly difficult that will is to do—if life be such a liberty, and such a hope, and such an agony, then Christ alone is the strength of our life. He will not fail us in any of its wants and struggles; but he that cometh to Him shall never hunger, and he that believeth in Him shall never thirst.

Now, that we may get our common life about

[1] W. B. Robertson.

us, let us recall three of its main wants—its want of struggle against sin, its want of love, its want of consecration—and see how this Sacrament meets these.

1. This Sacrament tells us first and foremost of a *struggle against sin*. We are asked indeed to enjoy the results of that struggle—the forgiveness and the grace that it won for us; bread of strength, and wine of pardon. But we are not allowed to forget how our sin was removed—what it cost our Lord in battle and in death. The bread is broken, the wine poured forth, in memory that our sin brought Him to the Cross—that He gave Himself to crucifixion for our guilt. The sight of this—that sin was met and overcome by sufferings and a contest so terrible—is enough of itself to beget in us a hatred for even the sweetest of our evil habits. But there is more than that here. There is more than the vision of how awful a conflict was endured for us by One who had no other need to enter it than the great love He bore us. There is the call to enter upon the struggle ourselves. There is the reminder that sin can be destroyed only by strenuous means. There is the warning that our daily commonplace sins need to be dealt with in the same earnestness and agony. There is the reminder which Paul states in just so many words, that as Christ was crucified *for* us, so we have to be crucified *with* Him.

When we are brought face to face with the Cross—with its rigours, its pains, and its death—do we not feel utterly ashamed of the easy conscience we hold towards our sins, and the half-measures we have used to get rid of them? The Cross, in these memorials of what happened upon it, reminds us that what sin needs is killing—crucifixion. Sin may not die at once; it may keep you fighting for a lifetime to kill it; but it is only when your heart is wholly committed against it, is wholly bent upon its destruction, that increasing victory will be granted you, and you will be spared the awful shame of passing from life without having overcome.

2. Then, if we bring our common life up to this Sacrament, we shall feel our *want of love*. 'God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' That grace, that self-sacrifice, that heroism—may God's Spirit loosen our wonder and our affection upon them! May we really be stirred by the thought of our Father's mercy; of our elder Brother's perfect love to us! May we take new heart in our despondency and our poor struggles after sanctification! He who hath so loved us will not leave us alone, but will love us to the end, past sorrow, past sin and past death.

Let us feel all this to the uttermost; but in any rapture it inspires do not let us fail to compare with it our own temper and conduct. For we must not think that this love is beyond our imitation; that there is here an instance of heroism and self-sacrifice which only a very few, and these at a great distance, are called to repeat in their own lives. In most lives, it is true, the opportunities to heroic sacrifice are very rare. 'But there is a harder, a braver, a better thing than heroic action—namely, the power of the Cross in little, common things.' The most sublime fact which could happen to-day—the fact which would more change and illuminate the world than anything else—would be the lighting up of millions of average Christian lives with the spirit of the Cross.

¶ In those mystic sayings of Jesus dug up at Oxyrhynchus is this sentence: 'Raise the stone and thou shalt find Me, cleave the wood and I am there.' What does this mean but that in the often commonplace work of the mason and the carpenter the Invisible but Living Christ is to be found as a Partner? [1]

It is not the emergence of a man here and there from the crowd into a brilliant heroism that the world needs. It is the shedding abroad of tenderness, pity, and the cheer and sympathy which come from self-forgetfulness. It is the shedding abroad of the dew and lustre of all that upon the unattractive characters of respectable religious people. Therefore let us ask from Christ the spirit of the Cross for our daily life—habitual patience, self-restraint, self-forgetfulness, charity, and tenderness for others.

3. The third want of our life is the *want of consecration*. If we have sensitive consciences to-day, two things must be troubling us. First, our little influence for good in the world; and, secondly, the number of vulgar and base

[1] E. J. Ives, *The Pledges of His Love*, 129.

temptations which assail us from day to day—not great, clean temptations, in which, as in Christ's, we feel God's Spirit testing us for discipline, but the occupation of our minds by sordid things, the irritation of our hearts by trifling worries—all the kind of things we feel we ought to be above if we are God's true children.

Both of these experiences betray the same want—the want of consecration. We have not shown any difference from the world; we have not got on with our work; we have not been free from the baser temptations, just in proportion as our consecration has been partial and insincere. In the presence of our Master's perfect sacrifice we are called to give ourselves to God. May the faithfulness, the utterness of Christ's devotion come down on us! May His love consume in us all that is dishonourable, break the bands that bind us to sin, engage every one of our faculties and affections, and bring us with every talent we possess and every opportunity to the service of God and His Kingdom!

We need a consecration without censoriousness, an intensity without narrowness, a complete dedication, and a lowly heart.

¶ We all remember the fair promise of the young poet, Charles Hamilton Sorley, who fell early in the Great War. His head master wrote of him: 'Rupert Brooke had just entered the temple of literary fame; Charles Sorley was waiting breathless in the outer court. That he would have reached the shrine I make no doubt.' Just before he sailed for France he sang:

> With parted lips and outstretched hands
> And listening ears Thy servant stands,
> Call Thou early, call Thou late
> To Thy great service dedicate.

The poem ends on the great word, and so did his life. For such men always reach the shrine. When men of lowly heart are dedicated to His service, their feet are on the steps of the altar, and their home, even in the hell of war, is in the Holy of Holies.[1]

[1] W. B. Brash, *Letters to 'The Happy Warrior,'* 17.

Eucharist

Luke xxii. 19.—'He took bread, and gave thanks.'

The rich significance of the Lord's Supper strikes many different notes in the scale of the heart's emotions. By its appeal to the conscience it rouses the feeling of contrition and penitence; by turning the eyes of the worshipper from himself to his Saviour it brings the blessedness of peace and love. The appeal which every thought of Jesus makes meets with the response of love, and love once springing up goes on deepening and broadening till it becomes universal in its sweep. The penitential note changes into a triumphant peal of gratitude and praise. The Supper becomes a joyful thanksgiving service, for gratitude and gladness are twin virtues.

¶ It is this which made the fortune of Christianity—its gladness, not its sorrow; not its assigning the spiritual world to Christ and the material world to the devil, but its drawing from the spiritual world a source of joy so abundant that it ran over upon the material world and transfigured it.[1]

The Greek word used by Jesus for 'giving thanks' has been used by many branches of His Church as the supreme name for this Sacrament, 'The Eucharist.' Like the Passover, it is a feast of joyful gratitude. The gladness found expression in singing the *Hallel*, comprising the group of Psalms numbered cxiii.-cxviii. Whether our Lord and His disciples sang these may be a matter of doubt; but we may be sure that the Psalms were a very fitting expression of their joy. The first is a celebration of Jehovah's greatness and goodness; the second, a song in memory of the triumphant escape from Egypt; the third contains a proclamation that God alone is to be depended upon; Ps. cxvi. is a poem of thanksgiving for deliverance from trials, and contains a notable suggestion about the true expression of gratitude; Ps. cxvii. calls all nations to join in praising Jehovah; whilst the last has for its theme:

> O give thanks unto Jehovah, for he is good;
> For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

If the Hebrew psalmists thus found matter

[1] M. Arnold, *Essays in Criticism.*

for such jubilant gratitude, how much more ought the Christian disciple to be joyful, when he is contemplating the greater mercies which the Holy Supper celebrates! Redemption from sin was no matter of course, no casual incident in the Divine dealings with men; it is a miracle of transcendent wonder, and our gratitude ought to be commensurate with our debt.

1. The call to gratitude is everywhere in the Scriptures, and to have 'the mind of Christ' is to have a thankful heart. Christ's own gratitude is a fruitful study: He thanked God as He broke the loaves and multiplied the food for the crowds by the lake side; He offered thanks to His Father that things hidden from the wise had been revealed to babes; He uttered His thanksgiving for answered prayer; He noted the absence of gratitude when only one out of ten healed lepers came back to thank Him. Nor were the Apostles less grateful than their Master, for the note of praise and thanksgiving breaks forth from their hearts again and again: 'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.' 'I do not hesitate to say,' says Dr Denney, 'that the sense of debt to Christ is the most profound and most pervasive of all the emotions in the New Testament.' The New Testament is hot with passionate emotion. The writers wrote out of their burning hearts; feeling their debt to Christ, they strove to express their gratitude. Past, present, future, each contributed something to feed the fire; they rejoiced in what Christ had done and was doing and was yet about to do for them and the world. Their Lord was a Benefactor to whom they could never render a thanksgiving quite worthy. It could not be confined to words; it demanded a heart, a service, a life.

Such gratitude is the response alone suitable to the appeal which the Lord's Supper makes. As it symbolically sets forth the unpayable debt we are under to Christ, it time after time calls upon us to render a joyful homage of thanksgiving. Every repetition recalls the miracle of His grace. We whisper in our hearts, 'Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house that thou hast brought us hitherto?' When an African chief a few years ago was taken to the English king's levée, and was asked what he thought of it, he replied, 'I was most of all surprised to see myself there.'

2. How does gratitude express itself? Wordsworth has described how a heart can be so full of thanksgiving that it rises to a condition of silent rapture.

> In such high hour
> Of visitation from the living God,
> Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
> No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
> Rapt into still communion that transcends
> The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
> His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
> That made him; it was blessedness and love![1]

When the tide of the soul is too full for sound or foam, the lips are silenced. Those who know such great moments find none more thrilling. We find it impossible adequately to express the tides of strong rapture which surge through the soul. They are to be translated only by life and action.

The psalmist who wrote Ps. cxvi. seems to have felt the same difficulty, but discovered a true method by which our gratitude can be shown. Charles Wesley put the thought into his verse:

> What shall I render to my God
> For all His mercy's store?
> I'll take the gifts He hath bestowed
> And humbly ask for more.

We can recognize this form of gratitude readily enough without considering ourselves as selfishly greedy. When a poet has inspired our flagging hearts with a stirring poem, or an artist has roused us with a noble painting, we turn to him and say, 'Go on with your great work, give us more of your treasures.' They realize our gratitude is of the truest type; they know they have penetrated to our hearts. Should we not express our gratefulness to God in the same way? He has given us such strong assurance of His love that we cannot but ask for more of His gifts. For so, indeed, we grow; we receive, and, in gratitude, we venture to ask for greater and higher gifts; and when we receive these, they in turn inspire yet further requests. As we become recipients of gift upon gift, grace upon grace, we journey on

[1] Wordsworth, *Excursion*, bk. i.

from strength to strength. Gratitude sharpens the appetite; and, increasing with every gracious satisfaction, we grow in stature till we shall be 'filled unto all the fullness of God.' Every sacramental hour is a Eucharist, for every hour is a fresh witness to everlasting mercy.

3. Gratitude has also great vitalizing power over other fundamental virtues. Itself the child of memory, it fosters others in its turn. As thanksgiving becomes a normal and habitual attitude of the soul it gives vigour to humility and cheerfulness and contentment. It quickens the submission, and inspires the courage which can endure discipline with patience. When the cup of life is bitter, and the flesh is tempted to refuse it, is it not a truly thankful heart alone that can say, 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?'

Thus the Lord's Supper calls upon the partaker to make it a great act of thanksgiving and praise. If we do not always rise to that ecstasy when our 'mind is a thanksgiving,' we shall always feel some of the exhilaration of gratitude. We are in His debt; He gave Himself for us; He is giving Himself to us. We can but reply by our word of praise and our life of service.

In Remembrance

Luke xxii. 19.—'This do in remembrance of me.'

The Jewish Passover was a memorial festival, commemorating the wonderful deliverance from Egypt. In the Upper Room Christ instituted another commemorative festival in order that His followers might ever bear in mind His redemption, His self-sacrifice for the world. The Lord's Supper comes with its appeal to memory, so that the fact it celebrates and the truths it shadows forth may for ever be riveted upon the soul of the Christian disciple.

Memory is a faculty within our minds, potent for good or evil. The good management of life demands that we train our memories, and cultivate the art of forgetting as well as the art of remembering. When we associate evil with good, or sin with the Saviour, we find the remembrance of the second will overwhelm the memory of the first. If we cannot dip our sins in the waters of Lethe and forget them, we can always associate them with the Hand that plucked us from their grip and saved us from final ruin. Bunyan, with his usual piercing insight into spiritual things, tells that the spot where Christian had his battle with Apollyon was in 'a narrow passage just beyond Forgetful Green.' The Bible again and again emphasizes the place and power of memory. It might almost have as a motto St Peter's words: 'I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance.'

¶ When you go to put flowers upon a grave, what is the motive that prompts you?—to keep memory green? Doubtless; but is that all? Why do you wish to keep memory green? It is because you are looking forward as well as backward. You are convinced the old days will come again. If it were not for that hope, you could not plant your flower. Some have written of the pleasures of memory, and some of the pleasures of hope. But has it occurred to either that the pleasures of memory *are* the pleasures of hope? When hope dies, memory cries out to be killed; she cannot abide alone. When memory goes with her flowers to the grave, hope calls from the shadowy land, 'Occupy till I come.' If she did not hear that call, she could not plant her flower. My Lord tells me that when I build to His past I am prompted by His future. It is the light of Easter morn that leads me to the sepulchre; it is the gleam of resurrection that conducts me to the broken body.[1]

Christ commanded His disciples to keep a supper as a memorial of Himself. No book, no place, but a service was to be the monument by which their memories were to be kept awake. Nor did He say that the service was to be in memory of His death alone, but 'This do in remembrance of me.' We cannot separate His teaching from His life, nor His life from His death, nor His death from His resurrection. As Dr C. Anderson Scott has said: 'To an extraordinary degree the Lord's Supper gathers up into itself the greatest truths of our religion and the deepest realities of our experience. Every aspect of Christ's work—as Saviour, as Propitiation, as Friend, as Lord and Master, as Intercessor and as Judge—is concentrated in the commemoration that we make.' If the Cross, by reference to

[1] G. Matheson, *Searchings in the Silence*, 223.

the Blood, becomes the most prominent thought at the Supper, it is because it was the crowning act of the ministry of His life.[1]

The Lord's Supper is thus a Memorial, yet not simply a memorial, for it is not suggested that there are not other implications. As we know, the Holy Festival is called by a variety of names, all beautiful, and all carrying a gracious significance, such names as Eucharist, Sacrament, and Communion. There is likewise a variety of doctrines of the sacred Institution from the simplest to the most involved. But in religion we cannot possibly fall into error so long as we build upon a truth which the human intellect can readily grasp; and, however far we may proceed in Christian experience and knowledge, let us not forget that the Lord's Supper is primarily and essentially a Memorial of Christ.

Speaking in a detached way we might suggest that a form of memorial could have been chosen other than the bread and wine selected by our Lord. But that which He did assume He adopted with a special intention. The Bread is broken; His Body was to be broken. The Wine is poured out; His Blood was to be shed.

¶ Ulysses advised Achilles to give bread and wine to the Achaei before the battle, saying that 'therein lay strength and courage.' To the Greek the strength of the arm is derived from bread, and the courage to kill from wine. Wine to make men drunk that they may destroy each other, and bread to strengthen their arms that they may destroy and never be tired. The bread that Christ distributes does not strengthen the flesh, but the spirit, and His wine imparts the Divine intoxication that is love, love which the Apostle will call (and thereby scandalize Ulysses' descendants) the madness of the Cross.[2]

Christ deliberately instituted the Supper as a pictorial expression of His Death for our salvation, not of His Ministry and Teaching, and not of His Sinless Character, but of His Sacrificial Death. This, of course, is a deep, almost an impenetrable, mystery. *Sacramentum* is the Latin equivalent of the Greek word for *mystery*, and has in it the element of indefinableness; and certainly this mystery is not to be cheaply exposed in a few easily made sentences. But let us remind ourselves for our encouragement that the Death of our Lord as the agency of man's salvation is accepted by the Church Universal as the central article of the Christian faith. Let us imagine that round the Holy Table were seated, let us say the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Presidents of the Wesleyan Conference and the Congregational Union, the Moderators of Presbyterianism, and even the Pope of Rome, these venerable leaders might shake their heads sadly over propositions that might be advanced bearing on Ritual, Dogma, and Church Government, but if one of these fathers solemnly said, 'The Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin,' everyone would bow assent and breathe a fervent 'Amen.'

Let us be ready to show forbearance on this deep mystery of the faith. If a brother-Christian has been in the enemy's country a prisoner, and in Christ's Death has been brought home, and so calls Jesus his 'Ransom,' who are we to forbid him the right to make such a testimony? Or the man or woman who has been sensibly under God's wrath and curse, but is now through the Saviour's Death at peace with Him, and on that account speaks of that Death as an 'Expiation'—what right has anyone to question this description? Or the convert whose experience is that Jesus in His Dying did something for him which he could not do for himself, calling Him his 'Substitute'; or the saved castaway, looking at the cleanness of his robes and recalling like a haunting nightmare their former pollution, testifying with a note of triumph that he has been 'washed in the Blood of the Lamb'—by what right, native or acquired, dare we disparage such a witness? No, at the Lord's Table, hearkening to the Master's own words, 'My Body' and 'My Blood,' let us humbly have respect to our brother's experience, and lose sight for the moment of all theorizing in the indwelling fact—'I lay my burden down at the Cross, I need never feel it more.'

Why we should observe the Lord's Supper, what those benefits are which we may receive at the Lord's Table, are questions that may be answered by the implications of Christ's own words. As a rule it is taken for granted that the command of a superior officer is given to be obeyed. The Captain of our salvation, at

[1] E. J. Ives, *The Pledges of His Love*, 47.
[2] G. Papini, *The Story of Christ*, 308.

this crisis in His career, is not making a suggestion, or expressing a desire, or tabling a proposal which we may discuss with Him in conference. He commands. Apart, therefore, from the benefits to be received at Holy Communion, the note of authority in the warrant ought to leave no option to the 'good soldier of Jesus Christ.'

As we look back to that little company of disciples in the Upper Room, bewildered by many conflicting thoughts and entangled among half-remembered words of their Lord, we see His kindness to them in giving them something *to do*. They could all engage in this simplest of rites. The religion of Christ is meant for all men—He does not ask for subtle thoughts and rare experiences, only for love; and it is a test of love that we faithfully obey Him. Neither conscious unworthiness nor timidity, nor a dislike of ceremonies, ought to bar the way of obedience, or serve as an excuse from keeping this memorial feast. Every command is the envelope of a promise, and every promise encloses a blessing. We miss some blessing if we neglect His slightest wish. Whilst the frequent repetition must continually renew our sense of His grace, the repetition becomes a boon, for our needs are every day as fresh as the dawn. Our hunger for Christ can never be sated. Every satisfaction creates an appetite for more. Age cannot wither nor custom stale the infinite variety of Divine grace. Every repetition will find some new point of vantage from which the redemption wrought out by Christ is seen in some glad new light. Like the old man in Sir Walter Scott's *Old Mortality* who spent his days going from graveyard to graveyard picking out the names of the dead Covenanters on the moss-covered tombstones, so every time we keep the feast some new word comes to us, awakening in our hearts fresh devotion and love. Taking our place in this Covenant of Love, we repeat our *Sacramentum*, and consecrate our life, with all its promise and potentiality, to our Captain.

When I forget Thee, like a sun-parched land
Which neither rain nor dew from heaven hath wet,
So my soul withers, and I understand
Wherefore Thou gavest me this high command
Not to forget.

When I forget the death which is my life,
How weak I am! how full of fear and fret!
How my heart wavers in a constant strife
With mists and clouds that gather round me rife,
When I forget!

Ah, how can I forget? And yet my heart
By dull oblivious thought is hard beset,
Bred in the street, the meadow, or the mart:
Yet Thou my strength and life and glory art,
Though I forget.

I will remember all Thy Love divine;
Oh meet Thou with me where Thy saints are met,
Revive me with the holy bread and wine,
And may my love, O God, lay hold on Thine,
And ne'er forget.

And not to-day alone, but evermore
Oh let me feel the burden of the debt—
The load of sorrow that the Master bore,
The load of goodness that He keeps in store,
And not forget![1]

The Sensitiveness of Purity

Luke xxii. 21.—'The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.'

THE story tells that Jesus and His disciples were at supper, and that during that sacred hour of fellowship Jesus appalled them with the announcement that one of them would betray Him. The trend of events was already casting dark shadows over the little company, but in that hour it was alarming to learn that their greatest danger was from within—that the hand of the betrayer was on the table. Who discovered it? Who knew the worst? The Best. It was to holiness the blot became apparent.

This is the sensitiveness of purity—an altogether different quality from suspicion. The worst men are often the most suspicious, simply because suspicion is often but a reflection of a man's own defects upon others. Purity, on the other hand, is never suspicious in the bad sense, never untrustful where it may find some ground for reposing trust, never in search of faults. But it is very

[1] Walter C. Smith.

sensitive, and the finer its quality, the more sensitive it is. It is a great discoverer of disguises.

¶ It was Christabel's pure soul that discovered the sin in Geraldine. It is she and not Sir Leoline who shudders at the evil she feels hidden there.

> The maid, devoid of guile and sin,
> I know not how, in fearful wise,
> So deeply had she drunken in
> That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,
> That all her features were resigned
> To this sole image in her mind.[1]

That purity has the power of apprehension, of penetrative insight and quick discovery, there is no doubt. Let us look at its importance, its practical uses.

1. It is important for *our own personal advancement in holiness*. The purer we are, the quicker will be our moral perceptions. The strong sense of right which is on the other side a keen sense of wrong is most important for judgments in our own hearts and in the world. The right or wrong of all our action lies in its motive impulse. Nor can we ascribe praise or blame unless there was a possible alternative. So virtuous act is a choice, an act of discrimination between two or more possible acts. In this discrimination personal purity is of the utmost importance for virtue. The more there is of it, the stronger man will be against the glamour and power of smaller and meaner interests. Nothing is more important than to have souls that shall be sensitive to unreality everywhere. To be able to see the hideousness that clothes itself in beauty; to detect the wrong that speaks with all the accents and plausibility of right; to discern betrayal in the hand that ostensibly proffers help; to catch the note of falsehood in the speech and prayer that are made to ring with an earnestness which is for a purpose, and made to order—and to do this, without ever ascribing evil to the good, without losing faith in humanity and God, without becoming a disbeliever in virtue, and without allowing at all in one's self the growth of the mere suspicious temper, is an endowment of the pure, a power of those whose souls are clean.

[1] Coleridge, *Christabel*.

2. Purity is most important as *a social influence*. Men who have it in an exceptional measure acquire a tremendous power over others. We see what happened in the society of Jesus. The sensitiveness of His purity became a light in which His disciples searched themselves. 'They began to enquire among themselves which of them it was that should do this thing.' Here were men who loved Him, who were very far from any purpose of betrayal, but who knew what a labyrinth of strange possibilities human nature was, and they would look again through the inner recesses of the soul, in the blaze of this light.

> I strove with faltering lips to speak of Thee,
> To tell the power of Thy humanity;
> But, oh! one upward, single glance at that
> calm face
> Compelled a downward look of self-disgrace.
>
> Its purity appalled! Its love did thrill
> My inmost being, spirit, soul, and will.
> *Felt* was that beauty I could not express,
> Love in mute stricken tears of tenderness.

What the purity of Jesus did for those men it has done for Christendom—turned men in upon themselves to ask what they have done and what they may do.

¶ In one of those appealing glimpses of autobiography which he has given to the world, Mark Rutherford tells how the memory of a passing glimpse of a woman's pure face, in the street, came back to him a thousand times in after life, and its sacred beauty judged him, and redeemed him—yea, he uses that tremendous word *redeemed*.

It is precisely the same effect which the Russian Dostoievsky describes in his wonderful story 'The Idiot.' How the pity and innocence of the central figure of the story cleansed and stilled the sordid, restless atmosphere of the society in which he moved! His presence made one beautiful sinner imagine she saw in vision Christ alone with a little child, listening to its confiding talk, 'one hand reposing on the child's bright head. His eyes have a far-away expression. Thought great as the Universe is in them—His face is sad. The little one leans its elbow upon Christ's knee, and with its cheek resting on its hand, gazes up at Him, pondering as children sometimes

do ponder. . . .' And then, with a sudden impulse of emotion she declares to the man who has wrought this strange effect upon her, 'You are innocent—and in your innocence lies all your perfection. . . . I have renounced the world. You think it strange that I should say so, for you saw me decked with lace and diamonds, in the company of drunkards and wastrels. Let not that perplex you. I know that I have almost ceased to exist. God knows what is dwelling within me now—it is not myself.' [1]

3. Purity gives us *true sympathy*. It is worthy of note that the very person who stands as our model of the sensitiveness of purity stands also as our model of sympathy. Jesus, who was so quick to discern sin, was also the surest to supply the sympathy that was needed. Sometimes He would not even join in any verbal condemnation of the sinner. Think of that story in the Fourth Gospel when the Pharisees brought a sinful woman into Jesus' presence. They were bold not because they were pure; He, the purest of all, had least to say. They went out one after the other. When alone with the woman, He said, 'Where are thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?' 'No man, Lord.' 'Neither do I condemn thee; go, sin no more.' Let us 'look unto Him'; let us commune much with His Spirit. The purest men are apt to have their sensibilities blunted by constant contact with the vulgarities of life.

Here arises the need for us all to renew ourselves at the fountains of Divine life. In the companionship of the best, in meditation on the highest, in frequent intercourse with the pure Image that illumines the New Testament, let us keep ourselves for God, and in that keeping serve men.

Rivalry

Luke xxii. 24.—'And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.'

THE strife for pre-eminence among the disciples of Jesus took place at the very table where He sat with them on the night before His crucifixion. We say 'How strange it was!' and it was very strange, indeed.

[1] F. J. North.

Think of that old picture. Jesus, the Master, sits at the table, and all around Him are His twelve disciples. He is the Life, and so His presence sheds vitality on every side. It is like the sun shining on a fertile field; all kinds of dispositions and emotions spring up freely. Love, regret, indignation, resolution, expectation—these and a host of others are all there. And among all the rest, out of these fruitful hearts quickened by the warm sunshine of Christ's nature present with them, springs up emulation. The disciples begin to look suspiciously on one another. The clear air becomes thick with comparisons. They are not content to be asking simply how great and good each of them can be, but there grows up in each soul a desire to be greater and better than the others.

We want, first of all, to recognize how perfectly natural this is. There are two ways in which a man may estimate his progress and the position which he holds at any moment. There is the absolute method, and there is the comparative method. Take your profession. You have been working as a mechanic, a lawyer, a merchant, or a physician for many years. You ask yourself some morning, 'How do I stand to-day?'

There is no better test of what sort of man you are than the way in which you try to answer this. On the one hand, you may look round and see how other men are doing. You may take men whose life in your profession is recognized as a success, and ask yourself whether you are as successful as they. 'Am I as honest, as prosperous, as well esteemed as this man or as that man who is accepted as a fair specimen of what a man in this profession ought to be?' You try to find your true place in a long scale marked by the greater or less attainment of your brethren. That is the comparative method of estimating yourself. On the other hand, instead of comparing yourself with your fellows you may sit down and try to realize absolutely what your profession and the man working in it ought to be. You try to summon up that vision of it which you saw burning before your imagination when you first set out upon it. You ask yourself how far you have satisfied the purposes for which your occupation has its being in the world. That is the absolute method of estimating yourself. The difference is clear. And if we

think of two men living their lives under the impulses which these two ways of judgment will create—then the difference is more striking still. One man is anxious to outstrip as many of his brethren as possible; the other is anxious to get as near as possible to the true standard of his occupation. One is all keenly alive with rivalry; the other is earnestly set upon attainment.

¶ 'Let me say,' writes Carlyle, 'there are two kinds of ambition, one wholly blameable, the other laudable and inevitable. The selfish wish to shine over others, let it be accounted altogether poor and miserable. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." And yet I say there is an irrepressible tendency in every man to develop himself according to the magnitude which nature has made him of, to speak out and to act out what Nature has laid in him. This is proper, fit, inevitable; nay, it is duty, the duty of duties.'

When we state it thus we see at once how the absolute method is finer and higher than the comparative, and at the same time we realize how largely the comparative method rules the lives of men. Look at the boy at school; is it always pure love of learning that makes him struggle so to learn his lesson? Not likely! It is the passion to outstrip the other boys and win the head of the class or the medal that shall show he has surpassed them. Look at the busy citizen, eager in all public affairs, restless, observant, impatient, putting a useful hand to necessary tasks of every kind. Is it a simple public spirit that inspires him? Not likely! A desire to be more valued by his fellow-citizens than any other—that certainly is a large part of what we see kindling in his eye and moving in his tireless hands and feet. To take out competition, to bid each man do his work from the pure impulse of the work itself, to bid each man run round the race-course of his life alone, do we not know what listless runners that would make?

When we think in this way of rivalry or emulation, we see immediately its dangers and how great they are. We see how rivalry must oftentimes be tempted to detract from the good name of others, and to hold back those whom it is hard to keep up with or surpass. And there also is the danger of too easy self-content, the danger which comes to all of us when we have found no competitors in any particular race whom we could not outstrip, and yet are far from having put forth all the power that is in us, or from reaching the goal which is the only worthy satisfaction. Among the men whose struggles are comparative, not absolute, the ugly, envious faces and the complacent, satisfied faces are too common. If they are strugglers hard-pushed by their competitors, they grow jealous; if they have won their victory and are no longer likely to be outrun, they grow self-satisfied. To be eager and earnest, and yet not to want to hinder any other man from doing his best; to be calm and serene, and yet to be full of energy and hope of higher things—this comes to him who strives, not to be stronger than his brethren, but to be ever stronger than himself, ever nearer to the fullest strength which it is in him to obtain.

Let us consider the subject in relation to (1) the strength and persistence of life, (2) purity of life, (3) breadth of life, and (4) Christ's attitude to it.

1. To young people, especially, one would like to say that much of *the strength and persistence of life* lies in learning early to depend upon absolute and personal relations to the objects which they desire. Insist on feeling the intrinsic power of the things you seek. So, and so only, can you be sure that even if every other seeker should become discouraged and drop away, your search would still go on. You start upon a course of reading or of study with congenial companions. A generous rivalry begins at once. That is very good, of course. But if that be all, or if it be the principal thing, the whole enterprise is weak. The book itself, the author's valuable thought, the truth he has to tell—in these must be the real attraction. If you are really set on these, then you may gladly accept the stimulus and pleasant excitement which come from matching mind with mind among your fellow-students; just as a ship bound for the North Pole may easily indulge in a friendly race with another ship bound for the same mysterious goal; but the true purpose of the voyage, the thing which keeps the ship stern and determined, and makes it safe not to be misled by the fascinations of the race, is the unseen purpose of its voyage, the mysterious Pole whose deeper fascination has drawn it out of its home-harbour and keeps it steadfast on its way.

2. It is not only the strength and persistence of life, it is also *the purity of life*, which is secured by service of the absolute. The eagerness which comes by rivalry is unreliable and ready to give way; but even while it lasts it is of poorer quality than the eagerness which comes from a real desire for the essential nature of the things we see. Learning shines upon its hilltop, and the desire to know in the soul of man leaps up to greet it. Strength calls from the distance with its rugged voice, and the desire to be strong which is in man hears and answers to the call. The struggle and search which follow until the purpose is attained are legitimate and pure. Rivalry on the other hand, the desire to outstrip our brethren, is always trembling on the brink of jealousy and spite. It is so easy to pull down the reputation which is a little too high for us to match; it is so hard to be glad of the good thing which another man does, when it makes what we are doing seem poor and insignificant.

¶ We are not jealous of Shakespeare. We are not envious of the courage of Livingstone or the character of Phillips Brooks. Persons like them awaken in us aspiration, not envy, and the reason is plain. We are not in active competition with Livingstone or Brooks. But when he who has been running just behind us in the race of life, on the same road with us, strikes up a swifter beat and, after running with us neck and neck awhile, forges ahead and leaves us behind, then we may learn the meaning of the Hebrew proverb:

> Wrath is cruel, and anger is overwhelming;
> But who is able to stand before jealousy?

Disraeli and Gladstone had long been rivals, and when Gladstone successfully attacked his opponent's policies in Turkey Disraeli turned on him and called him 'a sophistical rhetorician, inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity.'[1]

3. *Breadth of life* is also secured by aiming at the absolute. Rivalry is apt to limit our lives to those companionships in which we can easily be first. So we lose the broader fields of action in which we should get the greatest exercise and growth, even though we were constantly outstripped. How many men are doing this! What multitudes of men are spending their lives in playing children's games, because they know the petty cards and can easily beat in them, and letting the brave man's work which they ought to be doing lie undone. How one wants to cry to them: 'Go and meet men worthy of your manhood. It is better to be beaten in wrestling with the strongest than to win a thousand battles over adversaries just a little weaker than yourself.'

But is it not better still to beg them not to think about outstripping each other, but rather of getting to the goal! Let your whole soul be set on God, on getting to Him. Entering into Him, filling your life with His, *then* look round with joy at the progress which other souls are making towards that only satisfaction of a human life.

4. *Christ's Attitude to Rivalry.*—Let us turn now to Jesus, and see how in this story He dealt with this disposition of rivalry which He found breaking out in His disciples. In general His way of dealing with it was that which we have seen. The whole spirit of His gospel was for ever trying to draw men away from the slavery of the relative into the freedom of the absolute. He never encourages men to compare themselves with one another. He is always bidding them be perfect like their Father. Yet He does not ignore the power of comparison. He does not ignore any of the powers which have their essence in the constitution of humanity. He often takes a lower power, as He does here, and rescues it from many of its dangers, by suggesting a higher for it. This is the principle which Christ applies to rivalry. He sees His disciples in danger of using it for low purposes—wanting to compete for tawdry reputation and position—'which of them should be accounted the greatest?' Such a use of it would make the power itself tawdry. Jesus says: 'No! If you must use the power use it for a fine, unselfish thing, and so make it fine and unselfish.' 'He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve.' How deep and wise that is! Jesus says: 'Must you then use this power of competition? It might be better if you did not use it at all; but, if you must use it, make it as noble as you can by using it

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 168.

on noble things. Use it for human good. Let your rivalry be a rivalry in self-sacrifice. Compete with one another in humility. See which can be the truest servant.' If the disciples did what Christ bade them do—and in a large measure they did—they must have been the subjects of a continual surprise. The old power, transfigured by its new use, must have amazed them with its possibilities. There could be rivalry without hate or grudge! They could struggle to beat and yet rejoice to be beaten; for if they were beaten when they made their most earnest efforts to be useful, it merely meant that their brethren had more power of usefulness than they, and so the thing for which they strove became more perfectly done.

What would be the result if the teaching of Jesus were accepted by all of this great world of competing men? Here are these eager hearts all eager to outstrip each other. Rivalry sparkles in every eye, and is the restless, almost frantic power which keeps all this life alive. Suppose some mighty power could take it all and make a change. Not now, who shall be richest, or who shall be most powerful, or even who shall be most learned?—but who shall be most useful, who shall be most absolutely devoted to the good of his fellow-man?

For ourselves let us see that our rivalry is always for the deepest and truest things. Let us measure ourselves not by the unstable standard of other men's lives but by the great unchanging patterns of life that are kept in the treasury of God. So will Christ become truly our Master.

The Servant of All

Luke xxii. 27.—'I am among you as he that serveth.'

THERE are few parts of Scripture more interesting or more beautiful than the chapters in the second part of the Book of Isaiah dealing with 'the Servant of the Lord.' Yet there are few passages that less readily admit of a clear and consistent interpretation. The thought seems again and again to shift its standpoint; it is as though different hands had in turn taken up the ruling idea, not so much to develop it as to mould it afresh. To begin with, the Servant of the Lord is Israel: 'Thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen.' Then the ground shifts, and the Servant of the Lord seems to be an Israel within the Israel, an elect remnant called to render service to the larger whole of the national life. Then the ground shifts again, and the Servant of the Lord becomes a great, lonely, suffering, triumphing Figure, with whose lineaments we are all familiar as they are depicted in the fifty-third chapter—a Figure whose significance for the prophet and his contemporaries it is not easy to discover, though from our later standpoint it shadows forth ideals which were fulfilled only in Jesus Christ.

Now, we can hardly doubt that these chapters dealing with 'the Servant of the Lord' were among the favourite reading of Jesus Christ. It is sometimes interesting, when you are reading a book, to think of those who read it before you. When you are reading Romans, pause over the verse 'The just shall live by faith,' and remember how it smote through the soul of Luther like a sunbeam through the darkness. When you are reading the *Devotions* of Lancelot Andrewes, remember that for long that book was meant to have only one reader, and that reader the writer himself. When you are reading that well-thumbed copy of the Bible at home, remember the honoured dead who once studied it and lived upon it, and found in it their map and guide through this world to a better. Even so, do not read those chapters in Isaiah without remembering that no one ever studied them so eagerly as did our Lord. So the conviction took deeper and deeper root within Him that there was no calling so glad and so glorious as to be the Servant of the Lord, even though the service were to reach its climax in suffering. So it came to pass, under the guidance of God, that His programme and His Spirit were those of the evangelical prophet rather than those of the Messiah as popularly conceived. When He came to Nazareth and got His first opportunity of public speech in the synagogue, it was in the words of that prophet that He described His mission. If only we could have heard Him on the night when He began at 'Moses and all the prophets,' and expounded to His two wondering listeners 'the things concerning Himself'!

Yet, was there not another book also in

which our Lord read His summons to be the Servant of God and man—His own heart? Would He not have read His destiny there, even had there been no evangelical prophet to help Him spell it out? Would He not have taken the yoke upon Him with joy, even had no voice of long ago proclaimed the glory of a life of service? For while He grew in wisdom and in stature, there never was a day when His heart was not full of love. He grew in His knowledge of all that love implied, in His perception of the destiny to which love called Him. But from the beginning love swayed Him, and filled Him from centre to circumference: He would have been no Incarnation and no Revelation of God had He not been full of love; for 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' He was Servant of God because He loved God, of man because He loved man, of all because He loved all. In the strength of love He could do all things and bear all burdens. The only thing He could not do was to be untrue to Himself. Yet from our side of it this is a very wonderful aspect of the portrait of Jesus, and one which ought never to lose its wonder and its charm. Two thoughts will help to bring the wonder of it home to us.

1. The first is the thought of who and what He was. It is not necessary to dwell on the breadth and height and majesty of that thought, but notice this. He did not wish the thought of His own greatness to be dissociated from the thought of His work as Servant of all—He wanted the latter thought read in the light of the former; He Himself twined the two thoughts together more than once. 'Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister'—see how He brings their littleness to the side of His own greatness. 'I am among you as he that serveth'—I among you, the King among the subjects, the Master among the disciples.

And Paul in his greatest Christological passage, 'Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant,' does not go one step further than is implied in Christ's own teaching. That He should be servant of all!—well, it was, to say the least of it, gloriously unconventional! Old thrones tottered, and hoary conventionalities received their sentence of death, when the Greatest that ever stepped upon this world spoke and acted like this. But here was more than unconventionality: here was Grace—the glowing, shining miracle of Mercy. And all through the New Testament you can feel throbbing the pulse of an adoring gratitude to One who, though the Highest, had stooped to serve the humblest—who, though the Holiest, had given the sinfullest 'rest by His sorrow and life by His death.'

2. The wonder of this aspect of the character of Jesus is also brought home to us when we consider the extent to which He carried out the idea of service.

¶ Tolstoy in his Diary discusses the problem: How far does the law of love demand that I shall go? He treats the matter in concrete form by picturing two people who have taken up their abode in a village with a view to doing the people good. Their poor neighbours begin to make demands upon them, to all of which, obeying the law of love, they accede. 'A man comes who is a drunkard and a debauchee, whom they have helped several times, and who has always drunk whatever they gave him. He comes now, his jaw trembling, and asks for six shillings to replace money he has stolen and drunk. They say they have only eight shillings, which they want for a payment due to-morrow. Then the man says, "Yes, I see, you talk; but when it comes to acts, you're like the rest—you let the man you call a brother perish rather than suffer yourselves."' Tolstoy presses home the question, 'Where can one draw the line?' And he answers his own question thus: 'Only that love is true love which knows no limit to sacrifice, even unto death.'

Christ gave the same answer to the same question, though He safeguarded it in two ways at least. On the one hand, He excluded a service of one's fellow-men which would do them harm. Service that ministers to lust and weakness is no true service; generosity that destroys the moral fibre of its recipients violates the deepest law of Christian love. Then, on the other hand, Christ excluded a service of His fellow-men which would interfere with His Divinely appointed mission. One

came to Him saying, 'Speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.' But He refused. A very different programme of service lay before Him: this task might be another's—it was not His. For Himself, and presumably also for us, He limited the law of service by the principle of selection and of concentration. But in the line of service to which God called Him, who shall measure, except by the help of His own immeasurable cross, the heroism of His self-forgetfulness? His was not the spirit that asked, 'How little will suffice?' When we see Him devoting Himself to the training of the Twelve, bearing with their slowness, not wearying of them in spite of their stupidity and waywardness; when we see Him serving the poor and the diseased and the ignorant with a tireless patience, finding, not His task alone, but His meat and drink, His heart's deepest satisfaction, in serving God by serving man; when we ponder over that last acted parable, when He took a towel and girded Himself, and poured water into a basin, and began to wash His disciples' feet, and said, 'Know ye what I have done to you?'—when we see that He accepted Calvary as part of His service, and gave Himself in addition to all He had already given—then we know that even the best of all the other servants in God's great house is but an unprofitable servant, when compared with this Servant, who is not only Servant but Son, who is not only Son but Sacrifice without blemish and without spot.

If we have caught any glimpse at all of the great principles underlying this subject, these should clarify our vision of ourselves and of our neighbours and of Christ. What about *ourselves*? Are we seeking now, like the disciples long ago, to be great in the Kingdom? The Master points the way. He, the Greatest of all, was never greater than when He stooped to serve. After all, we are looking at things from the conventional standpoint, we are speaking with the accent of Vanity Fair, when we speak of Him as stooping, condescending, laying His glory by. From God's standpoint He was never so royal as when He committed Himself to a life and death of service. If we are eager for honour, we must remember that it is more important to deserve it than to get it. And as for the way to deserve it, the Master's life and death say even more plainly than His words, 'Whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all.' And what about *others*? Must we not, if we are true to Jesus Christ, pierce below such outward accidents as title and position and wealth to recognize true worth? If we do not, surely we have been in His school to little profit! Of old it was the idle man who was honoured, and the toiling man who was despised. But now that we have seen Jesus, the world is turned upside-down, and the scale of honour is reversed. Now we deem the life of service to be itself a crown of glory.

¶ The conquest of self, the triumph of the spirit of love, was illustrated in small matters as well as in great. One day a Frenchman, François, refused to clean the boots of another cadet, who was a German.

'I clean a German's boots? Never! never!'

The Maréchale quietly said:

'The boots will be cleaned.'

'Never by me!'

'By you.'

'Well, not now, let them wait!'

The whole day passed, and the boots were not cleaned. The Maréchale knew what François suffered inwardly, and got him alone in the evening.

'Jesus died for the Germans,' she said.

His lips remained tightly pressed. He suffered, and she suffered with him. After a moment's silence he burst into a torrent.

'We have endured too much! Think of the siege of Paris. That beast of a Bismarck! Oh! our country has suffered. Clean a German's boots? Never!'

He raved. The Maréchale was quiet and listened for a time. Then she said:

'All that may be true; but you are going to have a greater victory over the Germans than ever the Germans won over you. The triumph which they had over France was a flea-bite in comparison.'

She got his ear, and talked to him of the highest things. The victory which Jesus won on Calvary over Pilate and the Priests and Judas, this must be François' victory.

'Go back to your trade unless you can win this victory. This makes an apostle of François, and nothing else. These boots are only a detail, but they have brought to light something in you that is hindering the great victory.'

And so they talked. She would not force him. Next morning she gave a lecture, at the end of which he came into her room and sat down. There was a moment's silence, and then he collapsed, falling all of a heap and sobbing like a child.

'Maréchale,' he said, 'I will clean the boots!'[1]

And what of Jesus, who by life and word has taught us this? Let Paul drive home to us, with his strong, deep logic, the lesson of it all. 'He took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.' We dare not pass from thoughts like these without falling upon our faces. Because He was, even to the uttermost, the Servant of our interests, let Him have His reward in being made, even to the uttermost, the Master of our life.

The New Aristocracy

Luke xxii. 27.—'I am among you as he that serveth.'

Jesus said many startling things. If we were not so familiar with His teaching and could read it now for the first time, we should realize how revolutionary it is. He said nothing more startling than when He challenged the world's view of greatness. He declared that the greatest are not those who exercise lordship and dominion, but those who serve. 'I am in the midst of you,' He said, 'as he that serveth.' From some points of view it is not in the least surprising that the Jews rejected Jesus. In all their dreams of the Messiah they had never looked for Him to come 'in the form of a servant.' Even for us the grandeur and glory of Christ often hide His humility. We think of Him as incomparably the greatest figure in history, and as the Christ who is enthroned in glory at the right hand of God; and the thought is often somewhat obscure of Jesus the carpenter of Nazareth, the Man who had not where to lay His head, and who spent busy days and nights toiling in the midst of the multitude. Jesus was literally the servant of God and the servant of man. The commonly accepted ideal of society in all lands is that the privileged should exploit the unprivileged. Of course we do not consciously put it in that crude form, but that is what it amounts to. Our aristocracies consist of those who are in a position to demand the ministrations of others. As we win our way in the world we make increasing demands on the services of our fellows. We delegate the disagreeable and irksome tasks of life to others not so well situated as we are, and we sometimes even yield to the temptation of doing all our works of love and mercy by proxy. But Jesus shouldered the disagreeable tasks of life Himself. He was not a mere director of service; He was Himself a servant. He founded a New Society ruled by a New Aristocracy comprising those who serve. We are stirred as we read that Jesus was moved with compassion toward the multitude, and we feel within us the kindling of similar emotions. But what is to be the practical individual outcome of compassion, if it is not to evaporate in mere sentiment? With us, as with Jesus, compassion must find its outlet in personal service. What kind of service can we render?

1. *Our interests must extend beyond the circle of self and the family.*—We all know the meaning of the sin of selfishness, and abhor it. We have no respect for the individual who is absolutely self-centred, and we should be ashamed if we thought that the charge could be brought against us. But there is another more subtle and refined form of selfishness, which centres not in the individual but in the family. A man's interests and sympathies may be bounded by the walls of his own garden, and though he be the embodiment of unselfishness at home, he may be the incarnation of self-seeking and self-assertion abroad. We must learn to view society with the eyes of Christ, and to see in all mankind the family of God, demanding from us sympathy and unselfish service like that which we render to the members of our own households.

In our homes we are bound to employ paid service to a greater or less degree, but it is a commonplace that no paid service can take the place of the tender ministry of parents and children and of brothers and sisters to one another. The sick child may have a trained nurse who is most skilful and kind, but he cries out for his mother. And in our service of society we must often secure others to do

[1] J. Strahan, *The Maréchale*, 133.

what we cannot do. We contribute to support hospitals, orphanages, district nurses, and missionaries; that is, we engage others to do work which, from the nature of circumstances, we cannot do ourselves. But do not let us forget that paid service can never wholly take the place of personal service. In the great family of mankind, whose Father is God, and so many of whose members are sorely stricken, there is no touch that soothes and heals like that of personal sympathy and love.

¶ Some years ago, at the anniversary of Bloomsbury Central Church, I met Dr Clifford and he asked me to introduce him to the preacher—as if he needed an introduction to anybody. After the service I made up a party of five or six distinguished preachers who wanted to talk to Dr Clifford, and we adjourned to the Russell Hotel for tea. Suddenly Dr Clifford got up and, in spite of many protests, announced that he must go. I went to the door with him and ventured to ask why he had to leave us so soon. He then told me that in connection with Westbourne Park Chapel he had a home for domestic servants where they could go when out of a situation. Some mistresses, he explained, were very hard, and if a servant came home late, or if some trouble arose, they would put a girl's boxes in the hall and tell her to clear out. Under such perilous circumstances she could find a refuge and welcome in Dr Clifford's little home. 'And,' he added, 'every Friday evening I call in and spend an hour talking to them—they seem to like it.'[1]

Have you ever thought of the priceless treasures which each personality can impart to others? We may be poor and able to do little to relieve their material needs, but we have greater riches at our disposal, riches that grow not by hoarding but by spending. We are told that 'Jesus appointed twelve, *that they might be with him*.' The treasures which He had to give them were such as could only be imparted by contact and fellowship and service. If you ask who, in all history, has done most for the enrichment of life, there is only one answer—Jesus. How did He do it? By giving Himself; by taking 'the form of a servant.' Paul wrote in one of his letters, 'I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift.' Silver and gold he had none, but he gave himself, and in giving himself he lifted multitudes into newness of life. And that is what we can do, if we only awake to the value of what God has put in our power to dispense. To comfort the sorrowing, to speak a word of encouragement to those who are fighting a hard battle, to put our shoulder under the burden that is dragging another down to earth, to lighten loneliness by friendship and fellowship, to restore self-respect to those who despise themselves—that is to be in the midst of men as those who serve. Earl Grey writes of his father, a former Governor-General of Canada, 'He lit so many fires in cold rooms.' No one of us need desire that anything better be said of him at the end of the day. There are many cold rooms in life. Some are cold for lack of coal, and the relieving officer may light a fire in them. But there are rooms that are cold through lack of sympathy and friendship and love, and those who live in them are chilled and desolate and weary and disappointed. We can kindle a fire in these cold rooms with the touch of a Christlike sympathy and love. We can bring warmth to many whose hearts have been chilled by the arctic experiences of life. Jesus lit fires in cold rooms, and the fires which He kindled have never gone out.

¶ Fra Angelico teaches that the Cross is not the symbol of stoical self-control, but of love; that the giving of self to service is the proof of love; and that the obligation of helping humanity in love is the message of the Cross. To serve Christ *in* the poor is to Fra Angelico, monk as he was, the eternal obligation laid on us at once by the Perfect and the Gospel.[1]

2. *The ordinary work of life provides a sphere of service.*—The Christian spirit and ideal are to penetrate every sphere of life. Christ is satisfied with no partial allegiance. He demands the recognition of His absolute supremacy in the market, the office, the field, the council chamber, the legislature, the school, and the university. He recognizes no divorce between the sacred and the secular. There is a saying of His, outside the New Testament, which may be translated, 'Except ye make a Sabbath of the whole week ye shall not see the Father.'

Nothing is more common than to hear

[1] F. A. Atkins, *The Durable Satisfactions of Life*, 143.

[1] D. Butler, *Thomas à Kempis*, 152.

Christian men say that their time is necessarily so taken up with their business that they have no leisure for the service of God and man. Christ's answer is that you have all the time. Our everyday business is a Divine calling. It may sound Utopian, so far have we departed from the spirit of Jesus, but the primary aim of our calling in life is that we should serve the community.

¶ The master becomes necessarily in the course of his business the overseer and governor of large masses of men in a most direct way, so that upon him falls, in a great part, the responsibility for the kind of life they lead; and it becomes his duty, not only to be always considering how to produce what he sells in the purest and cheapest forms, but how to make the various employments involved in the production of transference of it most beneficial to the men employed.[1]

The same applies to those who are not masters. Imaginative writers have shown a true instinct when they have asserted that Jesus of Nazareth was a good carpenter. They are right when they tell us that if He mended a hole in a boat for the Sea of Galilee, it was properly repaired, and fishermen out at sea did not have to bail because of indolence or negligence on His part. Jesus of Nazareth worked in the carpenter's shop with the same thoroughness as He manifested when He ministered to the sick or preached to the multitude. We speak of the dignity of work. Whence is its dignity derived? From the fact *that it is service.* If our work ceases to be service, it becomes mere drudgery or money-grubbing. Scamped, half-hearted labour is a failure of service. It is the triumph of the ignoble self over the claims of others, and is fraught with moral consequences. To be negligent masters or workmen is to be inefficient servants of mankind.

3. *It is the servants of men who rule men.*—Jesus said that the servant is the great man. According to the prevailing ideas the great men are those who exercise lordship and dominion, command the services of others, and have won fame or rank or wealth or power. But Jesus teaches us that this is one of the fallacies which is at the root of much of our wrong thinking, and which has introduced so much that is baneful into our social life. Christianity turns our ideas upside down and gives us a new aristocracy. The world's greatest men are those who fashion human destiny, those who are regenerating their fellows by self-denying spiritual service, and are re-creating their environment by self-forgetful toil.

Who are these men? Not your Alexanders and Napoleons but men like Barnardo, Müller, and Stephenson who rescued the outcast child; or like Shaftesbury who cleared the coal mines of women and children, and paved the way for reform in almost every walk of life; or like William Booth and Wilson Carlile who sought and rescued the lost and the fallen; or like George Washington whose greatest endowment according to Frederic Harrison was not imagination or brilliancy but character. Some of the servants of humanity have left their names inscribed in letters of gold upon the roll of fame, but many have left behind them no such memorial.

> Went the day well? We died and never knew,
> But, well or ill, England, we died for you!

So it has been with the servants of man in all generations. Many of them died ere they knew whether the day was going well or ill for the cause which they had at heart. But whether they lived or died, they fought beneath the banner of the Divine Servant of Humanity, and, because they served, they rule age after age, generation after generation, are to-day shaping and fashioning the life of humanity to higher ends.

[1] Ruskin.

The Great Estimate of Jesus

Luke xxii. 28.—'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.'

Evening is the time for reflection, and when people are on the verge of parting they are often more inclined to recall the past, with its grave and bright experiences, than to anticipate the future. Jesus, sitting with His disciples on the night before His death, cast His thoughts backward as well as forward. He spoke of the future, in order to encourage and

direct His followers. He warned them against making pathos and regret the keynote of their faith. For—

> Whether we be young or old,
> Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
> Is with infinitude, and only there :
> With hope it is, hope that can never die,
> Effort, and expectation, and desire,
> And something evermore about to be.

Jesus gave them the assurance that great issues were in store for them, since He had control of their destiny ; I bequeath to you a kingdom. But He also turned their thoughts to the days behind, and spoke for a moment of the part they had played in the life upon earth which He was now leaving. You are the men who have stood by me in my temptations. That is the great estimate of Jesus.

1. It is *an estimate of His own life.* We sometimes speak about *the* temptations of Jesus, as if the threefold experience which the Gospels chronicle at the opening of His ministry were the only period of temptation through which He had to pass, until He came to the garden of Gethsemane ; but these temptations were probably over before any of the disciples had joined Him, and in any case the long interval between the two crises had its own discipline. The story of the three temptations does not exhaust the trials to His fidelity which Jesus encountered ; it merely summarizes some of the most characteristic. He was tempted by enthusiasm and zeal to lower His religion to the popular level, tempted to falter and draw back from the line of the Cross, tempted to lose patience with men, tempted by loneliness, tempted by those who cared most for Him—some of His subtlest temptations were whispered from the lips of His mother and His greatest friends. 'He suffered, being tempted.' He was keenly sensitive to the characteristic desires and passions of our nature. Of all this inner experience He rarely spoke to others. The deeper a nature is, the less demonstrative and voluble it is about such matters. But it is remarkable that, when He does take His disciples into His confidence, the word He chooses for His life is not 'my achievements,' not 'my disappointments,' not 'my hardships,' but *my temptations.*

Many a man or woman in their own way can echo that word of Jesus : *my temptations.* Sometimes it looks as if life consisted of little else, or as if no one realized how much we have to try our faith and patience. We are above the weakness which likes to parade its doubts and troubles. We have to keep a brave front to the outside world, while the heart within is often sick and afraid. Well, it is a strength to remember that, while other people may never suspect the weight of our difficulties or even imagine we have anything special to fight against, we are passing through a moral experience akin to that of Jesus. He went through that trial, and His spirit is with us in the ordeal.

But besides the word 'temptation' there is another important word in the text. It is 'continued.' Carlyle's mother regretfully acknowledged that her gifted son was sore difficult to live with ; and tendering something like an apology for his hero, Froude remarks, 'Dante and Isaiah were not probably exhilarating companions.' We do not know that any evidence exists to give sanction to this supposition. But whatever may have been the companionable qualities of Isaiah and Dante, it is clear that our Lord was not difficult to live with. He subjected Himself to this severe test, and bore it triumphantly. He elected twelve disciples to accompany Him and to dwell with Him, and they 'continued' with Him throughout His temptations. That they found Him in the best and highest sense 'an exhilarating companion' is plainly manifest. There is not an event or a word to indicate that the sublimity of His character, the seriousness of His spirit, or the momentousness of His mission made it difficult for His personal attendants to get on with Him. He was ever lovable, and ever loved by them, until one, yielding to covetousness, fell away from loyalty. There was no friction between the disciples and their Lord, but they who knew Him most intimately regarded Him with sincerest reverence and tender affection. Again and again, reading between the lines of the gospel narrative, we become conscious of the fact that the Apostles felt profoundly the charm of their Divine Master, and that they keenly enjoyed His delectable fellowship. Condescending, patient, free, He dwelt amongst them, talked with them, chided or soothed them, until He became the

object of their enthusiastic admiration, confidence, and love.

Are we easy to live with? This is an essential test of the genuineness of character. There is something wrong about persons who are habitually and really difficult to live with. We may explain and excuse our incompatibility by a variety of specious and flattering ingenuities; but usually people hard to live with and to get on with are guilty of serious moral deficiencies. The more we imbibe the spirit of our Master, the more shall we win the good opinion of those with whom we live.

2. It is *an estimate of His disciples*. 'Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.' They were at His side that evening. But they might not have been there. One of them, as He spoke, was hurrying along the dark streets to betray Him. Others, over the country, had fallen away from Him because He had disappointed their private hopes or put too severe a strain upon their endurance. Now, cowardice is apt to be infectious; it easily spreads among the members of a society. Jesus therefore appreciated the more highly those who had survived the sifting of His mission. He knew how easy it was for human nature to give way, and He recognized that it said a good deal for these men that they had lasted to the end.

Their loyalty, indeed, had not always been intelligent. More than once they had doubted His wisdom and even hesitated for a moment; but they had never gone back, and Jesus generously appreciated the support of their staunch perseverance.

¶ 'Believe me,' Charlotte Brontë wrote to Mrs Gaskell, 'though I was born in April, the month of cloud and sunshine, I am not changeful. My spirits are unequal, and sometimes I speak vehemently, and sometimes I say nothing at all; but I have a steady regard for you, and if you will let the cloud and shower pass by, be sure the sun is always behind, obscured, but still existing.' [1]

Possibly some of the disciples felt a trifle ashamed to receive the praise. They may have remembered how little use they had been to Jesus at the crucial moments of His career, and how inadequately they had supported Him. We must all have such reflections about ourselves. A sincere heart almost shrinks from being praised. We are ashamed to think how little we have done to deserve the recognition we receive from God or from our fellows. But, in the estimate of life, as Jesus made it, loyalty stands out conspicuous. Ordinary life cannot be full of dazzling exploits or striking words. But it is a great thing in the sight of God—we might almost say it is the great thing—to be at our post, and to keep at our post through the vicissitudes and monotony of the long hours, to maintain the Christian outlook upon life, in spite of all temptations to fall back on lower standards, to act steadily upon definite Christian motives, and to subordinate personal hopes and fears to the interests of the cause with which God has honoured us in the spirit and the company of Jesus.[1]

[1] E. C. Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 195.

The Great Sustainers

Luke xxii. 28.—'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.'

This is one of the most subduing words that ever fell from our Lord's lips. For, indeed, there is nothing so melting, so astounding, as one word of praise from Jesus. It were not strange did He speak encouragement in infinite condescension. The amazing thing is that there is no note or gesture of condescension in this memorable tribute, yet it might be argued with reason that the men to whom the words were spoken deserved but little praise. Their Master drew them out of their dullness and sin. He broke into their narrow life from a world of spiritual wonder, which they but half understood. He was their one hold on the greater life which is life indeed. If not to Him, to whom could they be faithful? They had done nothing really great. They were only twelve in number, yet one of them was a traitor. They were only twelve in number, yet another denied Him, and all forsook Him and fled. Surely they never merited such lavish praise. But that is not how He regards their unforgettable alliance. Rather is it thus. They were twelve in number, yet among them there was but one traitor. They were twelve in number, and in following Him they were launched upon a perilous course the end of which they

[1] J. Moffatt, *Reasons and Reasons*, 85.

could not see. Yet not till the very darkest hour, when strong hands snatched Him from them, did their courage fail, and this in spite of many fluctuations of fortune. There was a time when this Master of theirs was popular, and bore to their eyes the aspect of a national leader. Beyond visions of furious revolt there shone alluringly the vision of a recovered Kingdom. Nor were they proof against ambitious thoughts. They seemed at one time, even the greatest of them, to jostle one another in their scheming for the chief places of power. But when He deliberately, by His own hand, tore to shreds the fabric of their dreams and all their hope of temporal greatness, when He gave them their chance of following the disillusioned crowd that strode back to their natural resentments and material ambitions, they declined to go. 'To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of everlasting life.' They clung to Him as the mystery gathered and the crisis drew near. And through the crisis, dazed and dubious, their very love for Him protesting that death could mean death and nothing else, and severance from Him the end of all, they continued to the end. He sees none of their tremblings and fears, dubieties and hesitations. He only sees their faithfulness, and so He speaks the words that we cannot now read without emotion: 'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.' Perhaps the words bear an even deeper meaning. 'My temptations' may carry the meaning our English word conveys. For temptation was the fiercest of His trials, and it was not confined to forty days in the wilderness.

Let us consider, in the spirit of Jesus, what we owe to the loyalties of others.

1. Have we nothing to say as we look round the circle of our home, or a wider circle of true associates, not the casual friends with whom we have little in common, but those into whose heart we have looked, and who have looked back into ours? Have we no memory for their goodness, how they smoothed away our petulance among the minor miseries of life, how they stood beside us in the time of great decisions, when our character was in the making and our career in the balance, how in the day of our forsaking they remained with us, and because they did we despaired not of humanity—how in our great sorrow they brought us the choicest offering of friendship, a silent sympathy? The least we can do is to register an act of sacred remembrance. 'These are they which have continued with me in my temptations.'

¶ On one occasion when Dr Rainy was being assailed in the public press with more than usual malignity, a friend said to him that he wondered how he could go on under it so quietly. 'Oh, man,' replied the Principal, 'I'm happy at home.' Of course this answer does not give the whole secret of his almost unequalled serenity of spirit, but it is an interesting part of it. As to what he himself was in his home as a husband and father—that is something it is quite impossible to delineate here. He was so unfailingly strong and so unspeakably tender. It was not so much the particular thing he said or did that his family could tell of, as just himself—his presence in their home and their life; and that (as one of his daughters put it to me) 'is—is it not?—what we feel about the Heavenly Father.' [1]

¶ After the death of Fr. Ambrose St John, Cardinal Newman wrote to Sister Maria Pia:

'What a faithful friend he has been to me for 32 years! yet there are others as faithful. What a wonderful mercy it is to me that God has given me so many faithful friends! He has never left me without support at trying times. How much you did for me in the Achilli trial (and at other times), and I have never thanked you, as I ought to have done. This sometimes oppresses me—as if I was very ungrateful. You truly say that you have seen my beginning, middle, and end. Since his death, I have been reproaching myself for not expressing to *him* how much I felt *his* love—and I write this lest I should feel the same about you, should it be God's will that I should outlive you.' [2]

2. Have we no thought to give to the great company of every race who have fought a good fight and kept the faith? There are some people to whom the most inspiring and comforting thing in life, next to God's tender grace, is the thought of that immense, silent army of

[1] P. Carnegie Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy*, ii. 92.

[2] W. Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, ii. 412.

patient, active, upright, homely, hopeful folk, who bear burdens that seem crushing, and get through the stress of labour day by day with noble fortitude and invincible good temper. There is no man, be he ever so self-reliant, ever so surely set in the right way, who does not owe far more than he can ever tell of the atmosphere, exhilaration, and security of life to this brotherhood which never trumpets its presence, but just lives and labours in the faith of life and in the fear of God. These are they that have continued with us in our temptations.

¶ The indispensable people are the obscure, unpretentious, unknown workers; the quiet, devoted Sunday-school teachers, working at the lesson late at night after shutting up the shop; the steadfast, faithful local preachers, tramping many a weary mile to preach the gospel in a remote village; the little seamstress who works for a bare existence, but who brings a pound to the minister for the missionary society; the tired mother, on her feet from morning to night, whose simple goodness and undimmed cheerfulness make us ashamed of our petty complainings and our fretful, exacting selfishness.[1]

3. Have we no tribute of gratitude or admiration to offer to that gallant band who believe so passionately in the faith we profess, that they go forth into far and lonely places of the earth, among barbaric tribes and ancient civilizations, through African forests, by mighty rivers, and to islands of the sea where the surf beats in thunder. They, also, are sustainers of the human spirit. It is easier to be a Christian in England, because there are people who believe that the heathen can become Christian too, and who therefore dare the great adventure of the Evangel; for there is no man or woman who has endured great things, or done great things for the faith of Jesus, who has not helped to make life everywhere more noble, courageous, and secure. They also have continued with us in our temptations.

¶ Ion Keith-Falconer takes his place among the great missionaries in virtue of the circumstances which marked his dedication to the work, and the influence he exerted. Of noble birth and brilliant scholastic gifts, possessing wealth, he relinquished the certainty of a distinguished career in England to pioneer a mission amongst the Muslims of Southern Arabia. In his brief span of life there he accomplished little, but the work he initiated continues, and the inspiration of his character and example has been deep and widespread.

A memorial service was held at Mile-End on the Sunday after the news of his death was received, when a huge congregation gathered together; and he was held up as an example which others should follow. The platform was decorated with crape, and in the centre, facing the people, a portrait of Keith-Falconer was placed. The whole service was devoted to his memory—the hymns, the addresses, and the prayers all making reference to him who had sacrificed himself so nobly for the cause of Christ.[1]

4. Have we no quickening of gratitude as we think of the great society of Jesus, the fellowship of His Church, which holds in its heart, though it be in much weakness and unworthiness, the immortal hope and the all-sufficing gospel of the grace of God? The Church of Jesus Christ is deathless because He is deathless. The city of God remaineth: and no imagination can picture what it would mean for mankind if it were swept away.

¶ Take the words of Lecky, the historian, who is as far from being a narrow ecclesiastic as any man you can name—'What institution is there on earth,' he said, 'which is doing as much to furnish ideals and motives for the individual life by its moral appeal; to guide and purify the emotions through its well-appointed worship; to promote those habits of thought and desire which rise above the things of earth; to bestow comfort in old age, in sorrow, in disappointment; to keep alive a sense of that higher and further world to which we go as is the Christian Church?'[2]

5. And, finally, have we no thought for Another, greater than any human friendship or fellowship can be—the substance and fibre of every sustaining thought and impulse? There are silences in life in which no prayer is heard, empty spaces from which God seems to have fled because of our sin and distrust, yet even then we can decipher a promise. 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive

[1] F. A. Atkins, *The Durable Satisfactions of Life*, 116.

[1] J. Robson, *Ion Keith-Falconer of Arabia*.
[2] C. R. Brown, *The Young Man's Affairs*, 154.

us our sins.' This is He that continueth with us. The years roll on and yet we seem to get no further. Confusion and strife and many a humiliation attend our steps, yet if our heart be true, there is a vital and progressive principle nothing can resist. 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' It is He who continueth with us. Is it likely that He who sets such store on the fidelities of friendship, who knows what help, what incredible help, can come from a look of affection, who remembers what the steady march forward by His side of footsore and weary men could do to cheer their Master—is it likely that He will forget or fail? The wheel has come full circle now, and the Burden of Friendship is wholly on Him, and He can well sustain the burden. His friendship has been carried through Gethsemane to the Cross. Faithful in death He is not going to forget in life. This is He that liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore. This is He that continueth—the eternal continuance—with us in our temptations. So let us bring to Him the anxieties that depress us, the problems that elude our grasp, and the sins that go over our head. Let us take our appointed way in quietness of spirit, chastened indeed, but confident that we are not alone, that we can never be alone, because He, the Great Sustainer, has said, 'Lo, I am with you even to the end of the age.'

The Sifting of Peter

Luke xxii. 31.—'And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.'

1. The words are even stronger than our own version renders them; it is not only 'Satan hath desired,' but 'Satan hath obtained his desire.' We might even translate them, 'Satan hath got hold of you.' And the relative pronoun is plural; it was not only Peter, but all the Twelve, that Satan had desired, and had for a space obtained. The Saviour here forewarns the whole band of Apostles that Satan had asked to have them, that he might sift them as wheat. Hitherto he had only been permitted to sift them with a gentle agitation. Now he sought permission to shake them violently, as wheat is shaken in the sieve: to toss them to and fro with sharp and sudden temptations: to distract their minds with dismal forebodings and apprehensions; in the hope that they would be induced to let go their fast hold of faith, and take refuge in utter and irretrievable defection. Our Lord states this plainly, because it was important for them to know the full extent of their danger, in order that they might be on their guard. He does not tell them so plainly how far Satan's assault upon them would be attended with success. His disclosure stops short just where it would appear to be most interesting to His hearers. And this is generally the case with the Divine communications. Men would always like to be told more than it is good for them to know. But God draws the line, not with reference to our curiosity, but to His own gracious purposes for our well-being. So here the Saviour warns His disciples of their danger to induce them to watch and pray. If He had told them more—if He had revealed to them all that was to happen within the next twenty-four hours—they would have considered their fate as sealed, and would have given way to utter despair. But, while withholding this information, He told them something else which, instead of harming, was calculated to encourage and help them. Having excited their fears, by telling them what their adversary purposed against them, He threw into the opposite scale the cheering intelligence of what He would do and had already done for them. He told them that He had chosen one of them, whom He would take under His special protection—not for the sake of that individual alone, but in order that *his* preservation might be the means of saving them all. 'I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren.'

There was a day, one splendid but mysterious Book of Scripture tells us, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. Like them, he has his petition. He has cast a malignant eye, in his going to and fro on the earth, upon the prosperity and the integrity of one righteous man. He desires to have him. And God says, Behold, he is in thine hand. Such is the figure. He is to be tried. He is to be tempted. Satan begs him of God that he may sift him as wheat.

That narrative—best left perhaps in the

mystery which veils it, but pregnant for all time with inspired truth and wisdom—is the key to the expression before us. It is as though it were said: There has been again a mustering of the sons of God, and Satan, as is his wont, has presented himself among them. He has cast an evil eye upon your exceptional privileges, as companions, eye-witnesses, and ministers of the Word. He has watched your going out and your coming in, during these three years of personal attendance upon One whom he has found by his own bitter experience—in the wilderness first, then amidst every kind of disease, bodily, mental, spiritual—to be stronger than the strong one armed. I heard him beg for you—such is the force of the original—that he might sift you as wheat. Christ has His fan, Satan has his sieve: each for exploring, each for discriminating, amongst men, and still more in men, the chaff and the wheat.

The sifting of wheat is a most hard and thorough, but a most necessary, process. The wheat, as it has grown, has become associated with the protecting chaff, which it is necessary should be blown away, and with the foreign substances taken from the earth and from the air, which must be separated. Before the wheat is ready for use it must be sifted or winnowed; no pains must be spared to make the process as thorough as possible. Only an enemy to the wheat, or a disbeliever in its true powers, would desire to spare it such an ordeal. As it falls, after such a process, into the receptacle which has been prepared for it, solid and clean, its value is greatly enhanced. There is now no doubt about its true nature and the work to which it should be put. It carries out all the points of the analogy to notice that Peter is not promised that he shall be saved from the sifting process; no hand is put forth to hold him securely sheltered; no cloud wraps him away from danger. Peter is too valuable to be thus treated. If he is wheat, he must be sifted.

Peter's denial of his Master, as compared with the defection of the other Apostles, is often regarded from a wrong point of view. It is not the case that he, who should have been a pattern to the rest, proved the weakest of all, and the first to flee. When the chief priests came with a band of soldiers to take Jesus, Peter was the only one of the Apostles who made even a show of resistance. Peter and one other were the only two who followed Jesus into the palace of the high priest. Peter's failure, when it did happen, was owing to a train of circumstances from which his brethren, by their more hasty and precipitous failure, were exempt. Satan, on his first sifting, shook out all the other Apostles; but it required a stronger temptation, a more violent agitation of the sieve, to unfix the faith of Peter. And as Peter was the last to fall, he was also the first to rise and put together again the fragments of his shattered faith. From that hour he was an altered man. He added to his zeal, stedfastness; he exchanged his confident boasting for humility and dependence upon God. In this blessed recovery, do we not plainly see the influence of Divine grace? Are we not reminded immediately of the Saviour's words—'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not.'

2. Two thoughts suggest themselves about this story of the sifting of Peter.

(1) Look how the Divine order runs through his life and makes its unity impressive. At first Peter's life, as told so shortly in the New Testament, seems a chaos, a mere tangle, with no forethought, no settled and consistent plan about it. What a puzzle it must have looked when he first really saw it, a series of inconsistent fragments, of generous impulses and weak boastings, a mass of disorder and self-contradiction! And yet God had a plan for him—we see it as we study his life—though Peter had no plan for himself.

¶ Christ anticipates the trial of whose approach we are unconscious. Peter was profoundly ignorant of this diabolic malice and stratagem in the background, but the Redeemer was fully alive to the crisis, and warned His menaced disciple. Not only is Peter warned. He is strengthened in the supplication of his Master. And through all the fierce ordeal, the Redeemer does not forget the sincerity and hopefulness existing beneath all Peter's faithlessness. It is 'wheat' that is being sifted, whilst the whirlwind raised by the devil carries away only the chaff.

Here is a mighty comfort for me! In all this trying, tempting life my Master watches over me with eyes of flame, with tender solicitude, with sovereign power, over-ruling my

darkest moments to ends of purification and perfecting.[1]

If we would only rise to believing the same thing about ourselves! We look back on our lives, and we see a mass of contradictions, confusions, good resolutions broken, false steps made—a jumble, a chaos it seems to be; there is no possible unity about it; a collection of accidental and purposeless fragments, of firm resolutions and of miserable denials, of forgetfulness of all that is great and noble because some maid laughs. It all fills us with a sense of broken fragments; and those moments when the eye of Christ rested on us, when we understood, seem so scattered. All is confused and blurred and marred. Ah! let us get deeper. God has a plan for us as for Peter. With us, too, false steps bring misery, and are slowly and painfully retraced; with us, too, the triumphs of faith are set against failures; weak denials are retrieved by brave confessions. We do not take in the processes, but the evil is gradually sifted out, the good is consolidated, cultivated, made permanent, and in and through the strange discipline we trace a higher ordering than common sense will supply—the touch of Christ, the hand of God. Don't let us think that our passing impulses and our changing ideas or our broken purposes are all; if we will only believe and try to love, even through and by and amid our failures, God will bring out His unity—will so dispose our very falls that they will sift us from evil, and convert us to that true goodness that always trusts and never boasts.

(2) Again, Peter did not lose his strength because he surrendered self-confidence. Look at him in the Acts of the Apostles, a strong man to the end,

> Strong in the strength which God supplies
> Through His eternal Son.

Don't let anyone persuade us that a real Christian life is a weak thing—a thing of mere compliance, of bows and smiles and compliments, of insincere expressions, of universal amiability, and of glozing over men's sins and follies. Let us learn to call things by their right names. St Peter's language to Elymas is a good instance: 'Thy money perish with thee,' is no utterance of a man who has wasted his strength in mere insincere civilities. Strength of character does not consist in perpetual forwardness, but in the self-regulation that enables a man to speak and act strongly at the right moment. Let us be sure, if we place our trust in God and cleave to great causes as dear to Him, the less we shall need to apologize for our own weakness, the less we shall make the mistake of apologizing for strong language when we boldly rebuke evil. We shall make fewer mistakes; we shall be stronger in action, and really carry greater weight, because while we are increasingly certain (and there is no certainty so necessary) that we can achieve nothing lasting by our unassisted efforts, we shall also be undoubtedly convinced of the corresponding certainty that, in spite of all our past story of weakness and failure, we can yet, like the sifted Peter, 'do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us.'

¶ When it was said in the presence of John Smith, who was an under-master at Harrow School, and whose life was, as far as we ever can say it of any human life, a perfect and saintly one, that some one had a very difficult task before him, he exclaimed in astonishment, 'Difficult? Difficult? Why, he is a Christian.'

Intercessory Prayer

Luke xxii. 32.—'I have prayed for thee.'

1. *The subjective answer.* — There are some Christians who do not believe in intercession. They teach that the value of prayer is a subjective one—that it is only of value to the person who prays. And there are even those who do not believe in a personal God who hears and answers prayer, who yet acknowledge that prayer for our own moral improvement is sure to be successful, because it has the natural effect of putting the mind in the very state we wish it to be. They acknowledge, too, that prayer for others is most useful—that is, to ourselves—but they do not see how it can have any effect on others.

What is the use of praying for other people? Is it possible, we are asked, that God should be so unjust as not to help a certain person because people did not pray for him? Because a certain unfortunate person had no one to pray for him therefore God would not do what

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 293.

is necessary for his safety! Let me remind you that although it may be true that it is very unjust of God to give us the power of helping one another (which of course also implies the power of withholding that help) still it is not more unjust or more unreasonable in the case of prayer than it is in the case of any other kind of help. If you think it is not necessary for you to be kind to people, or to give them food when they are hungry; that it is not necessary for parents to sacrifice themselves for their children because surely God will look after them without assistance; then it is unreasonable also to pray for them. But if one kind of help is rational then the other kind is so too. It is only our curious habit of separating spiritual from material things that misleads us.

You would not say, 'It is unjust that babies should flourish when their parents look after them; surely God could look after them without their parents?' Yet the help that the parent gives is just as arbitrary, just as capricious if you like, as a prayer. It is on exactly the same level.

We are dependent on one another for food and clothes, and we are also dependent on one another for spiritual things; for our very knowledge of God we are dependent on others; it is what the prophets have told us and the saints have shown us; it is the love of our parents, our children, and our friends that teaches us something of God. Therefore to say 'We ought not to depend on each other's prayers' is unreasonable. There is no sense in saying that God 'ought not to require' this particular help. Human beings need all kinds of help from one another, and to pray for others is only one of the innumerable ways in which humanity is knit together.

If intercession-prayer for others can only result in your being a better man or woman yourself you do not feel that to be a satisfactory answer to your prayer for your brother. Besides, no one could pray for others merely in order to do good to himself. It would be hypocritical if it were possible, but it is not possible. Prayer offered in such a spirit would not be prayer, and would have no good effect on the character. It would be, in fact, turning what ought to be a discipline in unselfishness into a discipline in intense selfishness. Surely, then, we may reject an explanation which would annihilate the facts it undertakes to explain, and may believe that when affection prompts us to pray for those we love, and we find a blessing returned tenfold into our own bosom, He who made our nature, who has inspired the desire to pray, and has rewarded our prayer with an unasked blessing for ourselves, will also do for those on behalf of whom we plead more than either we can ask or think.

2. The second answer to prayer is the discovery that *we ourselves are the means*. We ask, then, What does really happen when we pray for other people? A number of things happens. It has been frequently found that when we pray for other people we discover something that we can do for them. When we pray for another person, our mind is full of that person in a sense that means love. We do not pray for them unless we love them. One might say it is no use praying for them unless we have some feeling for them which could come under the term love, and that is why many of our intercessory prayers seem to be unanswered.

If we work and pray, our work receives a blessing; if we pray without working, our prayer is but hypocrisy. St James has asked: 'If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?' A satirist has said that the instinct of compassion is so deeply planted in the human heart, that no one can see a fellow-creature in distress without wishing that some one else should relieve him. Yet our intercessions with other people for that purpose would not have much chance of success, if we begged for charities to which we refused to subscribe a penny of our own money. And can we suppose that we are at liberty to deal with God in a manner in which it would be unworthy to deal with our fellow-creatures? Surely every intercession we offer to God implies an obligation on ourselves. So our Lord has expressly taught us. When we say not, 'forgive *me* my trespasses,' but 'forgive *us* our trespasses,' He bids us ask ourselves if besides offences against God, there are offences against ourselves, do *we* forgive? But the same principle runs through every petition of our Lord's prayer, testing whether or not we are sincere in uttering it.

Intercession must be real. When we say

'Thy will be done' we must not mean that God is to do it, but what Christ meant, 'Here I stand ready to do it.' We will then see how natural it is that when we pray for another person the answer very often is the discovery by us ourselves of some way in which we can help them. When we pray for others we are thinking of them, we have their circumstances in our mind, their difficulty, or their want, and, thinking of it in that way, it frequently flashes across our mind that there is some way in which we can serve them.

¶ 'It's a strange thing,' said Dinah Morris, 'sometimes when I'm quite alone, sitting in my room with my eyes closed, or walking over the hills, the people I've seen and known, if it's only been for a few days, are brought before me, and I hear their voices and see them look and move almost plainer than I ever did when they were really with me so as I could touch them. And then my heart is drawn out towards them, and I feel their lot as if it was my own.'[1]

3. A third answer is *help by an invisible power*. But suppose there is no way in which you can serve them, still you, when you pray for them, are making yourself a channel for the power of God. God seeks to enter into the universe everywhere. He seeks to possess us and the person for whom we pray, and when He is able to find some one who will open the door for Him, who will make a way for Him, He comes. We all have the power in a sense to shut Him out. You can make yourself a non-conductor so that God cannot get through you into the world. If there is a person filled with love—and as St John said, that is the same as being filled with God—God comes there, into the world. That is why every saint makes God possible to the rest of the world! He has become a channel through which God enters into the world again to possess it.

And when you pray for others, it is good consciously and deliberately to offer yourself as that point of contact, as that channel; empty yourself of yourself and offer yourself to God as a means. You do not know how He will use you. That is the way in which great causes are helped. You cannot reach the leaders, perhaps, and yet by offering yourself as a channel for the will of God you help to purify the atmosphere, to create a right public opinion. You help that person by an invisible power.

¶ I think one of the strangest instances of God's message coming through a person was the case of a friend of mine who once said to me such a lovely thing that it has helped me all my life. It was such a help to me that when I saw people in the same sort of distress I used to say it to them. And one time I reminded my friend of it. She exclaimed, 'What a perfectly lovely thing to say! Who said it?' I said, 'Why, you did!' 'Oh no,' she said, 'it is a beautiful thing to say, but I never said it!' She was filled with love and with the spirit of God, and it reached me through her. She had not remembered what she said, yet it had put a light into my life that has never gone out.[1]

And you can direct that power. You offer yourself to God and He possesses you and passes on into the world beyond. You can direct that power to the person you desire. This is a real power, and because it is real you can direct it to people; and you will see that it has made a difference. But what kind of difference? Here we come across another difficulty. Have we the power to make some one do what we pray for whether they want to or not? No, we cannot compel them, and that is why sometimes it takes so much more patience and love to pray for other people than for oneself. Look at the case of Peter. Our Lord says He had prayed for him and that He was sure he would recover himself and help other people. Our Lord prayed that Peter should not fail, and His prayer was not answered in that respect. Peter did fail, and our Lord evidently knew he was going to. Prayer for others works just as the love of God works. It never coerces anyone. When shall we realize that love can only work after the laws of its own being? It is no use asking God to be love and to work as though He were force. Take any great force in the material world; you will realize at once that it is no use treating gas as though it were electricity, or electricity as though it were steam. Each has a great power, but each works after the law of its own nature: and love also works after the law of its own nature, and it cannot compel. That is how the love of God works in the world, and that is how intercessory prayer works. God will not take your human freedom and force it

[1] George Eliot, *Adam Bede*.

[1] A. Maude Royden, *Prayer as a Force*, 104.

into His shape, and you cannot take the human freedom of your friends and force them to be what you like. But when you pray for them you direct towards them the power and the love of God in a way which cannot be explained, for after all, who can explain the operation even of human thought?

¶ Modern psychology is changing all the old landmarks of philosophy. Two facts are gaining prominence. One concerns the direct influence of mind on mind. Amidst all the clashing of opinions as to the exact value of so-called spiritualistic phenomena, it is important to remember that scientific belief is steadily veering towards an acceptance of many facts proving the transference of thoughts in hitherto unrecognized ways. Such distinguished scientists as Sir William Crookes and Sir Oliver Lodge accept the facts of telepathy very decidedly. At the least, it may be conceded by all that mind-transferences are not so dependent upon material organs as we imagined. In physical science the amazing discovery has been made that electrical energy can be transmitted over vast distances without any connecting wires. A precisely similar advance is being made in psychical science.

The other fact is the existence of sub-consciousness in the individual. Very little is known with certainty about this dim region. But it is quite clear that the roadway of our thoughts is built upon arches. The goods that are carried along that elevated road are then stored under the arches; and they may be brought up again on any day. Now, it is highly probable that this sub-conscious region is capable of receiving impressions that do not appeal to our conscious life. Tints that awaken no sensation in the eye, tones that lie beyond the dull hearing of the ear, may find a responsive faculty in this mysterious region of being. The sub-conscious area or state may be likened to the receiving instrument for Marconigrams. It may be sensitive to suggestions sent out by other minds, and may interpret them for consciousness.

Do not these two facts offer a strictly scientific basis for a doctrine of intercessory prayer? He who prays may be radiating forth from himself waves of mental energy highly charged with ethical significance. He for whom prayer is made may receive these ripples, whether consciously or unconsciously, and will be influenced by their moral message. A Christian does not need any such theory to urge him to pray for others. But the hints which psychical science is throwing out so rapidly are an encouragement to those who sympathize with Tennyson's desire—

> Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell;
> That mind and soul, according well,
> May make one music as before,
> But vaster.[1]

We must remember that there is an important distinction between intercession and mediation. Each ought to intercede for others; but we have but one Mediator between God and men —the Man Christ Jesus. There is a feeling which sometimes leads men to ask the prayers of others—a feeling that they themselves are not good enough to address God, but that He will be more likely to listen to other men who are supposed to have higher claims on His favour. To ask for the prayers of others from such motives as this is to send them to God, whilst we ourselves remain away: it is making them mediators between us and God.

When St Paul asks for the prayers of his disciples, it surely was not that they were better entitled to God's favour, or more likely to be heard than he. We have special promises to mutual prayer, and we can well believe that the united prayers of Paul's converts were effectual in obtaining for him a still larger measure of the Holy Spirit. Mutual prayer of this kind does not keep anyone at a distance from God, but brings all nearer. And nothing can better enable us to realize the Communion of Saints, nothing can more thoroughly make us feel that we are one body, than if, instead of each striving to secure his own salvation, we strive one for another, not only helping each other by counsel and active exertion, but also striving for one another in mutual prayer.

If we only believed this—only believed it enough to try it—there would rise in our hearts a sense of power, not only to be ourselves better, but to make the world better, so that nothing should seem impossible.

[1] J. Hastings, *The Doctrine of Prayer*, 239.

INFLUENCE

Luke xxii. 31, 32.—'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou hast turned again (recovered from a temporary failure) be a strength to your brethren.'

The Upper Room has well been called the Holy of Holies to the Christian Church, because there our Lord unveiled Himself to the adoring but perplexed disciples. And His words of insight and peace have been the soul's anchor in all the storms of life. For the full fragrance of that parting hour we have to turn to the beloved disciple's narrative (John xiii.–xvii.); but it is to Luke, the physician, healer of the body and healer of the mind, that we owe the touching words in which Jesus spoke to the soul of Peter when He warned him that Satan desired to have him back again. But against Satan's opportunity—the temptations of our weakness, our slackness, and our unguarded hours—there prevails the importunity of Christ which would save to the uttermost. Many a man reads the throbbing words with a sharp stab of shame; for which of us can fail to recognize what is meant by Satan asking to have us back again. It is like the call to the wild, when in some dark hour we strain at the cords that bind us to the higher life, and in a few fatal moments are ready to lose all we have gained through years of endeavour; and to fall from God after having once attained unto Him. Such is the background of the Saviour's prayer, to warn us away from the precipice, and, if we have fallen, to breathe into us the assurance that no fall need be final, since God has not despaired of us. It is our breastplate against the despair of life—'Though I fall, I shall arise'; in every Achor there is a door of hope—His hope.

And so we take our Lord's prayer for Peter as one of the vital credentials of Christianity—that it has the power to recreate character, to set a man on his feet again, and give him back the face of God once more. But, though the rebirth of life through the prayers of Jesus stands in the forefront of the story, there is added what always accompanies salvation, the gift and the duty of Influence—'When thou hast turned again, strengthen thy brethren.' How the word sank into Peter's heart we can hear in the bugle note of his epistle to the persecuted and struggling Saints of Asia Minor. 'That letter is one of the most wonderfully heartening writings in the New Testament, coming as it did from one who had felt, and had yielded to, the temptation to shrink, and had instantly turned again. The fear of fear is an awful fear, for the man who feels it thinks he will forfeit the favour of God and man. But Jesus comforts the heart of the disciple, by opening up far-reaching possibilities of service and influence. And this is what Peter needed. There are, and always have been, a very large number of men who could face almost any danger if they could but be certain that they would face it creditably.'

We speak of the duty of Influence; we should call it rather the comforting gospel of Influence. For it reminds us of the traveller in an Arctic journey who saved his own life by his efforts to resuscitate a comrade who had fallen in the snow. And so our Lord gave to Peter in his dark hour the inspiring cordial, the moral tonic, that one who had failed would live to carry to others the cup of strength in some great agony. 'We are baffled to fight better.'

I

BIBLE PICTURES OF INFLUENCE

In the Old Testament and in the New there are many far-shining texts concerning the duty and the joy of Influence. In the desert, Moses invited Hobab to join Israel, with the assurance 'Come thou with us and we will do you good.' Could the result of a good man's influence on his country be more truly expressed than in the eulogium pronounced on Joshua, 'And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the Elders who outlived Joshua, and had known all the work of the Lord that he had wrought for Israel'? Shakespeare despairingly cries—'The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones.' But the Bible is truer to experience, and more just to human worth,

when it tells us that Joshua's light shone for many a day across the path of his countrymen.

> Full lasting is the song, though he
> The singer, passes.

From the time of the Judges there comes another fine saying on Influence. The kindling patriotism of Deborah touched Barak, who replied, 'If thou wilt go with me, then I will go, but if thou wilt not go with me I will not go.' The man's weakness was that he could not kindle his own fire; it needed the conquering will of a woman to make him venture to win. 'Barak,' one says, 'was of that type of man that finds it easier to believe in a woman than in God. And yet, perhaps, it is no disgrace to a man to yield his manhood and gratefully follow such a woman as this.' Tennyson said of his wife, 'The fear of God came into my life before the altar when I wedded her.' Again, the final meeting between David and Jonathan is an incomparable expression of friendship and influence—'Jonathan went to David into the wood and strengthened his hand in God.' 'Blessed influence of one true loving human soul on another.' In the story of Influence there is also the glowing passage (Is. lv. 5) where the mission of Israel to the surrounding people is exalted to the highest: 'Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and a nation that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, for he hath glorified thee.'

And, when we turn to the New Testament, every book gleams in praise of Influence. There is the 'salt' and the 'leaven' of our Lord's parables; and, from Horace Bushnell downwards, preachers have found inspiration in that famous text, 'Then went in also that other disciple which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed'—the infectious nature of Peter's courage on a more timid beholder (John xx. 8). But all these great texts yield the palm to the words of Jesus, who both warns and comforts His disciple—'When thou hast turned again, strengthen thy brethren. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.' No one lives apart from his fellows, and as Henry Drummond says, 'Every man will only finally succeed in gaining the victory in himself so that it includes others. A man this week was in difficulty about religious things, and I said, "Have you ever helped anyone?" He said "No." So I said, "Well, go *now*, and help somebody. I don't care how or when you do it. Simply do it. Go and help somebody."' It is this that Matthew Arnold celebrates in the tribute he paid to his father, the famous headmaster of Rugby—

> Therefore to thee it was given
> Many to save with thyself;
> And, at the end of thy day,
> O faithful shepherd! to come,
> Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.[1]

II

CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE

When we look back over the years we can see that we have become what we are by the direct but also by the indirect influences that have shaped our life, by the conscious and still more by the unconscious influences that have moulded character.

1. *Conscious Influence.*—Some of us can fix a day or a crisis about which we affirm with Dante 'Here beginneth the new life!' A definite impression, as of a hand reaching out to touch us, and we heard the voice of one who called. In the gallery of memory there is one portrait about which we can say 'He did me lasting good.' These are our real heroes of God's own making. 'We can recall those who opened our minds to new realms of thought and activity, who fired our ambitions, and gave a new direction to our lives.'[2] It may have been a book, a picture, or a preacher that has affected us so deeply as to make us largely what we are. Perhaps, more often, the influences that call us along the shining road are received in the homes of our youth. In the words of George Eliot, 'They are made flesh; they breathe on us with warm breath, they touch us with soft responsive hands, they look at us with sad sincere eyes, and speak to us in appealing tones; they are clothed in a living human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith, and

[1] *Rugby Chapel.*
[2] J. Burns, *Laws of the Upward Life*, 120.

its love. Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them with gentle compulsion, as flame is drawn to flame.'[1] It has been said that the chief want in life is somebody who shall make us do the best we can. For such a purpose God uses as a messenger to call the world to Himself 'The likeness of a long-dead mother's face; the echo of a children's hymn laden with pure memories, coming over the guilty years which lie between; the fragments of an old, forgotten text—these are the messengers which Heaven sends to call the world to God.'[2] And with these, and not even second to them, there is the message of that sentence on the tomb of Wilberforce in Westminster Abbey, 'There remains and ever will remain, the abiding eloquence of his Christian life.' When tongues shall cease, and prophets fail, there will always be an audience for the sermon which is preached by character.

> Honour to those whose words or deeds
> Thus help us in our daily needs,
> And by their overflow
> Raise us from what is low.
> . . . .
> Our hearts in glad surprise
> To higher levels rise.

Thus we influence one another directly and consciously. But, alas! we also infect one another. Doctors, we are told, sometimes hesitate to prescribe some medicines to people of a certain temperament because they are uncertain what reactions the drug may set up in their patients. And our character reacting on those around us may stir to virulent life ruinous temptations which infect the entire substance of another man's character. On the other hand, as a picture of influences that restore and bless, we are told how the shadow of Peter had power to heal the sick (Acts v. 15). We are all casting shadows beneficent or evil. And it is a fiery rain of retribution that falls on one, if he lives to see his own bad influence reappearing in the blights and blemishes of another man's character. 'The evil that men do lives after them.' But, thank God! there is another side to influence, the blessed power to heal and restore. 'Their works do follow them,' and the future is bright with their light. A story is told of a young officer who led the column through the pathless desert and the dark night, in the attack upon Tel-el-Kebir in the Egyptian War. He was shot down in the first shock of battle. But ere he passed away he had time to say this—'General, did I not lead them straight?' For such brave and clean souls all the trumpets will sound on the other side.

2. *Unconscious Influence.*—But in the scale of values as they affect life and character it is the unconscious influences that are the more important. The landscape of a countryside is hewn out and moulded not so much by the great and exceptional catastrophes of Nature, as by the continuous action, often unseen and unnoted, of rain and sunshine and the changing seasons. This is as true of influence as of the face of the world. We are all affected, more or less unconsciously, by the physical atmosphere in which we live and do our work; and it is still more true of the climate—religious, social, and moral—in which we move. Home influence is largely of the unconscious kind; it is an atmosphere. So also is that of the church, the school, the neighbourhood, and the comradeship of life. From these a rain of influences is steadily and silently falling upon us. The wind bloweth where it listeth; we hear the sound of it, but we cannot tell from how far it has come, or how far it will go. The familiar illustration of the stone thrown into the water, with its ripples which touch the further shore, is a real picture of the waves of influence which radiate through every society and church. Thus, to take an obvious example, it has been proved that nothing can do a neighbourhood more lasting good than to have in it at the same time a company of men and women who think alike on all vital things. Not for what they say, but for what they are. In the diary of Lord Guthrie, an interesting conversation is noted which he had with the late Dr Whyte. That eloquent preacher and shrewd judge of men, speaking of the father of a well-known literary man, said, 'He gave the speech of the day, but the old man was not always like that. He was once a sceptical, cynical, hard sort of a bodie, who seldom or never went to church. But the wife did it, and the bairns and the grace of God combined. And in the end I

[1] *Scenes of Clerical Life:* Janet's Repentance.
[2] Henry Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, 211.

never knew a better Christian.' The influences that make men are various, well-mixed and hard to separate. Some of them by themselves are trifles, but they are taken up by the Spirit of life to make a perfect picture, and that is no trifle. Perhaps, if all were known, men and women do more good, and have more influence, than they can feel or measure. I think Jesus meant this when in His parable (Matt. xxv. 37) He makes those on the right hand start back in surprise at the portrait He painted of them, and ask, 'Lord, when saw we thee a stranger and took thee in, or naked and clothed thee?' One of the revelations of the great day will be the revelation of the unknown influences that have brought us where we are. Emerson, in his poem *Each and All*, nobly teaches this.

The sexton, tolling his bell at noon,
Deems not that great Napoleon
Stops his horse, and lists with delight,
Whilst his files sweep round yon Alpine
height;
Nor knowest thou what argument
Thy life to thy neighbour's creed has lent.
All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone.

Is it not true even of the Master Himself? The influence of Christ was not confined to the Twelve or the circles He directly touched. 'Outside these circles,' as Dr A. B. Davidson says, 'there was a large movement that went on among others, as there is still. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works." These felt only the indirect agitation which ran out in eddies from the great central current.'[1] 'Sursum corda'; in the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand. The day will declare it.

Peter, in our text, needed just this encouragement, that he was to strengthen his brethren, to confirm them, and establish them, as the word implies, and make it easier for them to believe. He was to be Greatheart to weaker men, and in saving others he would save himself.

Ruskin used to say that a painter's high duty and privilege was to go out into God's world to see something of truth and beauty, and then to put it down on a canvas for other men to see also. And our influence will depend on what we have seen, and how we can translate this into the beauty of perfect deeds. Christ is preached by the life which shows Him in His loveliness, and men look up and are strengthened. The Early Church had few great preachers; but men at their trade, slaves on the rowing bench, soldiers in Cæsar's household carried Christ with them where they went, even as far as distant Britain, and thereby won the world for Him. Gibbon, discussing the causes which enabled the Christian religion to win the Roman Empire, numbers among them the fine morality of Christians and the high character of the women. 'What women these Christians have!' paganism itself confessed in envy. And so the house, the church, and the empire were filled with the fragrance of the Name, with the strength and beauty of the Religion of Jesus.

Mr Baldwin, in his recent book, makes a timely reference to the debt which England owes to John Wesley. 'We find,' he says, 'a great deal one hundred or two hundred years ago about politics, kings, and battles, but very little about a man called John Wesley. Yet, as the years go by, historians have begun to say that it was the lives of men like Wesley and Whitefield, and what they taught the people of this country, that really were the significant factors in moulding the character of the people and of the leaders of the people, and that it is largely owing to the spirit which they, and men like them, breathed throughout England, that the immense impetus was given to the reforms—social and religious—which took place in the country during the last century, and which helped, in spite of a thousand difficulties and evil things on the other side, to make the rough path smoother and to kindle afresh the Divine spark in the hearts of men.'[1]

Peter must 'turn again,' before he can strengthen his brethren; as Chaucer says of the 'poor parson'—

Cristes lore and His apostles twelve
He taughte, and first he folwed it himselve.

It was this kind of ministry Henry Drummond commended to the Edinburgh students: 'The first thing is to carry into the world that story of Jesus in your lives. Every man here

[1] *Waiting upon God*, 239.

[1] Stanley Baldwin, *On England and Other Addresses*.

to-night who names the name of Christ is to create round him an environment of Christ. And to some of you who will go out to your village and be the doctor of your neighbourhood, to you I say, Be some one to remind the people of Jesus. Be some one to represent Christ in the district. Do what He would do; say what He would say; live as He would live, just as if He were the doctor of the neighbourhood. Live the life, and reproduce the life of Christ.' [1]

Such are some of the Influences by which the brethren are strengthened. The number is incomplete since it is as broad as life itself. There remains one question and application—Where is the source of this dynamic energy which the New Testament calls 'The Power'?

III

THE SECRET OF INFLUENCE

'We had better,' some one says, 'not attempt to use our influence before we have it.' The New Testament leaves us in no doubt concerning the secret of power, for two words of Jesus are at the heart of religious experience—'Ye shall receive power,' and 'Without me ye can do nothing.'

The missioners of the Early Church are continually disclaiming their own power and goodness, but they are just as sure that in 'the Name,' in the Personality of Jesus there are reserves of strength and influence that are sufficient for them. In this they judged truly, for in religion Personality is everything. Behind all the great religions there is a Personality. But with this difference. Other faiths are now independent of their founders, Buddha, Zoroaster, or Muhammad, but Christianity is absolutely dependent on Jesus Christ, on His historic Personality, on His risen life, and His abiding presence. 'The regenerating influences in the world to-day are all traceable to the life of Jesus of Nazareth. We look in vain for a rival to the character of Christ, and we look in vain for a substitute for the salvation which comes through Christ.' This can be said without contradiction. In his latest book the Dean of St Paul's stresses the interest of the world in Jesus Christ: 'Most of the lives of Christ have had a great sale, the Public cannot have enough of them. Christ remains the most supremely interesting figure in all history, for in the words of an early writer "He summed up in Himself all the series of human existence, and this experience deepens with the course of time."' [1]

The hope of the future is with Jesus Christ. Therefore, the question of questions for a man who desires to influence the life of his time is to determine his own relation to Him who moves the world. The right hand of Influence can be stretched out only at His command. And fervour of character and service come from Him who said, 'He who is near me is near the fire.' Bunyan recognizes the truth of this in his picture of the fire upon which one poured a stream of cold water; yet did the fire burn higher and hotter. 'I would know the meaning of this' the Dreamer inquired, and indeed we all want to know how the glow and the fire of a good life may be sustained. The Interpreter answered, 'This is Christ, who continually with the oil of His grace maintains the work already begun in the heart.' This is the secret of Influence, that there is an intimate and free connection between His life and ours. We all know the days when we can do nothing; power, insight, persuasion have left us, and, when we try to help broken men, our influence withers before the task, and in despair we cry—Why could we not cast out the evil spirit that ruins life? We feel as if we had come to the dead line in life. But energy, power, and fire are waiting us in a return to Christ, to meditate on Him, and, like Peter, to turn again in the passion of a great repentance, in the tenderness of a full surrender.

Perhaps we should not lay down methods for one another. The soul will find its own way to touch Jesus, and renew its strength. But only this can liberate streams of influence. This is not theory but experience. Thousands can testify 'I have felt,' and it is these men who influence the world and strengthen their brethren. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and the world hears, and bends before Christian character that has been in fresh contact with Jesus. It is told of the late Dr Mackinnon, the medical missionary at Damascus, how he won the confidence of the people, and even of the native doctors, by the impression of his Christian

[1] *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 492.

[1] *Lay Thoughts of a Dean*, 360.

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character. Here was a man who lived in Christ's presence, Christ in him and he in Christ. And the world, so quick to see and so eager to recognize the real thing, was swayed by this missionary, 'who never forgot the Christian in the physician, and in the service of the King of Kings flew his flag with the Cross of Christ blazoned on it, in all weathers.' But such an influence comes only to those whose lives are hid with Christ in God. And for us ordinary and disheartened men, who have lost our influence in losing the face of Christ, it fortifies our souls to know that when we 'turn again' to God, we begin to have prevailing power with men, and strengthen our brethren by the reviving grace which has restored ourselves. Perhaps the secret of service, and the power of winning others, have never been better expressed than in Keble's lines in the *Christian Year*—

> First seek thy Saviour out, and dwell
> Beneath the shadow of His roof,
> Till thou hast scanned His features well,
> And known Him for the Christ by proof;
>
> Then, potent with the spell of Heaven,
> Go, and thine erring brother gain,
> Entice him home to be forgiven,
> Till he, too, see his Saviour plain.[1]

W. M. Grant.

The Religion of the Purse, the Wallet, and the Sword

Luke xxii. 35, 36.—'And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.'

1. The Lord Jesus Christ came not to give men exact and binding rules of conduct, but *large general principles*, capable of the most flexible and various application. Rules of conduct *are* to be found among His sayings, indeed: as, for example, when He bade His disciples, if smitten on the one cheek, turn the other also; or when He bade them, if any man took their coat, let him also rob them of their cloak; or when He bade them give to every one that asked an alms of them, or go out on a journey unprovided with any change of clothing and with an empty purse. But these rules were not meant for a literal, and still less for a universal, obedience, since our Lord Himself did not obey them, nor His Apostles: nay, more, these rules were thrown into a paradoxical form, a form in which a literal and universal obedience was simply impossible, in order that we might see that they were not mere rules, and be compelled to search for the principles which underlie them. Our Lord did not intend His own rules for a literal and universal obedience; but did intend that we should look through them to those great *principles* of justice, compassion, trust in God, and brotherly kindness, of which they were passing illustrations.

In our text He is not simply, as in the Sermon on the Mount, repealing rules and laws given by them of old time. He is not simply both supplanting and fulfilling them by the inward and spiritual principles to which they gave an imperfect and temporary form. He is repealing a rule which He Himself had given to His disciples only a few months ago, although, as they confess, that rule had worked very well. He is *replacing* it by a new rule, a rule the very opposite of that which He had previously given them; a rule which no sane and reflective man can possibly suppose He intended them to obey *as a rule*, since it is alien to the very spirit, to the whole drift, of His teaching.

And this conviction grows on us the more we study these remarkable verses. In the first of them (v. 35) our Lord reverts to the first missionary journey of the Twelve. When the second year of His ministry was drawing to a close, He sent them forth to teach and to preach in all the cities of Israel. They were, He told them, to take no money in their purses, not even the copper coins familiar to the poor; to carry no scrip, or travelling-bag, containing provisions and other conveniences for the journey, and no change of clothes or sandals; but to set off as they were, with nothing but a staff in their hands, casting themselves wholly on the kindness of men and the providence of God. This was to be their rule for the time. It may be that Christ thought it well to startle a selfish and indifferent world into attention, by pre-

[1] *St Andrew's Day.*

senting it with a spectacle such as it had never seen, or imagined, before. It may be that the Twelve drew all men's eyes upon them, and shewed that a new spirit of love and meekness and unselfish devotion had come into the world, by walking among them penniless yet content, and by submitting to any wrong or insult they chose to inflict. Such a spectacle could not fail to impress the world; it may have disposed many to believe that they who could do such things as these must have a message of love and peace and goodwill for their neighbours.

But even if the Twelve, for a time, rendered a literal obedience to these rules, it does not follow that the rules were designed for a constant and universal observance. Their trust in God, their meekness, their devotion to noble ends—these indeed are for all time; but not the modes in which they exhibited them. And it would be, as Stier calls it, 'a mere fanaticism of the letter' of Scripture, were we to bind these rules on the consciences of modern missionaries and ministers of the gospel. Take the spirit of Christ's injunction, say that no minister should waste his time and energies, and that no Church should compel or permit him to waste them, in securing a provision for the external wants and comforts of life; say that every minister and missionary should be so devoted to the service of God and man as to be bent on serving them at all costs and all risks; and you may very safely argue that the words of Christ are still binding. But read them as a rule, say that no minister or missionary is to have a purse, or a change of clothes, or more than one pair of boots, and you simply expose the words of Christ to ridicule and contempt. Not only so. You also insist on retaining a rule which He Himself has repealed, and on pushing aside the rule, which yet is equally binding, with which He replaced it. For at the close of His ministry, in view of the dark and troublous days that were coming on them, He gave the Twelve a new rule: 'But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.' Formerly, they were to go forth penniless, unprovided with aught but a staff, and to bear with meekness whatever wrongs or insults the world might inflict on them. Now, they are to put money in their purse, to pack their scrip with provisions and conveniences, to exchange their staff for a sword—not to submit to, but to defy and conquer, the hostility of the world.

Now, obviously, it is quite impossible that we should render a literal obedience to *both* these rules. Even a minister, or a missionary, cannot both take and not take a purse with him, cannot both submit to wrong and insult and resent them with the sword. And it is hardly less obvious that even the Twelve never attempted to obey the latter rule literally. When do we meet *them* with a full purse, or even trying to fill it? When do we see them anxiously accumulating a store of provisions and comforts, carrying a scrip that should render them independent of the bounty whether of man or of God? And how could the servants of Him whose kingdom is not of this world fight with the sword? None can well suppose that Christ meant the Apostles to leave the table at which they had just eaten their Last Supper with Him, and go out into the market to buy swords; or, having bought them, to wield them in His service: for only a few hours after these words were uttered St Peter did strike at Malchus with a sword, and only received a rebuke for his pains.

Here, then, Christ, in repealing a rule which He Himself had given, and replacing it with a rule the very opposite of that which He had given, drives us to look for the principles which underlie His words. He teaches us that as there are times when we are to win upon the world by unselfishness and an unresisting uncomplaining submission to wrong, in short by *not* resisting evil, so also there are times in which we *are* to resist, to strive against it manfully, to arm and nerve ourselves for the defence and furtherance of the Faith. If at times we are to be *meek* for the truth, at other times we are to be *valiant* for the truth.

2. What, then, is the principle underlying the second rule? It is surely this, that although *religion* is an inward life, it *is also action*. Religion is a comfortable meditation of the heart. It is serene light over our quiet thoughts. It may pervade a soul like some sweet music, heard through an open window, coming from afar. Piety is peace of heart. Religion is the Divine secret of a sure personal life. It is an aspiration, a prayer, the home-longing of a soul immortal, which is known to the Father

who seeth in secret. As an inward life religion is a withdrawal from the world; it is life's quiet morning or evening hour—some sacred experience not rudely to be touched or disclosed—a life hid with Christ in God. Religion is the holy of holies of the soul's temple, where there is no visible image to be found; without, round about this secret dwelling-place of the Lord, lie the open courts for life's common uses; but within this holy place of spiritual communion the footsteps of the crowding cares, and the din and confusion of the world's daily business, shall not enter and are not to be heard. Religion is God, and the soul beneath God's eye. Religion is man alone with his Maker. This truth of the inward spiritual reality of religion Jesus was always teaching the people.

But religion is also action. It is a marshalling of spiritual forces, the gleaming sometimes as of a sword through human life, the religion, as an apostle afterwards put it, not of weakness or fear, but of a sound mind and of power. Christianity was to be on earth the commanding influence of the Holy Spirit, using men's wills, moulding their purposes, availing itself of all the powers of human nature. It is significant that this thought of God's kingdom as the endeavour and conquest of active, sagacious men, who are to use all possible powers in its service, was evidently in the mind of Jesus on that same night in which He suffered Himself to be betrayed, and to be given up to Pilate to be crucified. For this shows that while Jesus was Himself turning His cheek to the smiter, and was led as a sheep to the slaughter, nevertheless at that hour His thought of God's will to be done on earth included not only His own passive obedience unto death, not only His submission which led Him to say when two swords were shown Him, 'It is enough,' but also His thought comprehended in obedience to God's will the service of brave action, the use of human means, the gathering of powers, the devotion, the offerings of property, and even the buying of swords in His name—all the service which, as we turn the illumined pages of Christian history, we learn has been rendered in grand works of faith, by heroic endeavours, with much endurance, through storm and flame and battle, by thousands of lives faithful unto death, in the world-conflict which is still, as always, to be waged between the powers of truth, justice, and of love, and the hosts of the evil one.

For still the Lord is Lord of might;
In deeds, in deeds, He takes delight;
The plough, the spear, the laden barks,
The field, the founded city, marks;
He marks the smiler of the streets,
The singer upon garden seats;
He sees the climber in the rocks:
To Him, the shepherd folds his flocks.
For those He loves that underprop
With daily virtues Heaven's top,
And bear the falling sky with ease,
Unfrowning caryatides.
Those He approves that ply the trade,
That rock the child, that wed the maid,
That with weak virtues, weaker hands,
Sow gladness on the peopled lands.
And still with laughter, song, and shout,
Spin the great wheel of earth about.[1]

Neglect either aspect of this religious whole of life, let either exclude the other, and we shall fail to fulfil Jesus' thought for His disciples, and to carry the gospel, as Jesus meant it should be carried, by all human means in strong Christian hands throughout the world. This truth that Christ's Christianity, being an inward state of souls, is also action, is the truth of religion to which the Holy Ghost is giving fresh witness in this present age. For religion now is revealing itself as action more hopefully than ever before.

Religion is the consecration and the energy of multitudes of minds and hearts, of the redeemed forces of human life, of business sagacity, of ceaseless industry, of investments of capital, of combinations of good men and of churches for the gospel's sake. It is the duty and the privilege of true disciples to take the purse, the wallet, and whatever else may be called for, and gladly to throw them into the conflict of the good against the evil.

Thou hast no tongue, O Christ, as once of old,
To tell the story of Thy love divine,
The story still as strange, as secret, as true;
But there's no tongue to tell it out but mine.

Thou hast no hands, O Christ, as once of old,
To feed the multitudes with bread divine;

[1] R. L. Stevenson.

Thou hast the living bread, enough for all,
But there's no hand to give it out but mine.

Thou hast no feet, O Christ, as once of old,
To go where Thy lost sheep in evil pine.
Thy love is still as strong, as true, as kind,
But now Thou hast no feet to go but mine.

And shall I use these ransomed powers of mine
For things that only minister to me?
Oh! take my tongue, my hands, my feet, my all,
And let them live, and give, and go for Thee.[1]

Consider, then, the stimulus which this truth of Christianity as religion in action may impart to us. Strong natures sometimes have not been sufficiently attracted to religion because they have failed to see this robust, vigorous demand of it; they feel themselves more at home in affairs than in meditations; they enjoy action more than prayers. But the sublimest action is always a prayer. And religion is the greatest action. To be a religious man is to be in touch and sympathy with the action, the great action of this and of all times. It is to be a doer of the Word.

¶ What we need is a great spiritual *motive* which will constrain men alike to wise thinking, hard praying, and energetic action. The motive is ready. It is the appeal of the Kingdom of God. You will remember how it was said in the war that this aspect of the Christian religion never failed to win a response among the men when it was put to them in a way they could understand. 'I fancy men see in this,' so wrote one chaplain, 'a new idea of Christianity. They see it as a sane working policy for every day; they see it not as a small parochial thing, but as something which is touching and helping to shape the great world movements of the present day. They are not nearly so concerned over saving their souls as they are about saving the world, and this appeal comes to them as a challenge and calls them to a bigger life. It puts before them a great adventure, a service for humanity, and all the best in them rises to the appeal.'[2]

The immense stimulus of this truth of the Christian religion of action lies also in its direct appeal to every human power. It does not select a few faculties or activities, calling them sacred, and letting the rest go as common or profane. It demands all. It touches every key; it sweeps the whole range of motives. These three words of our Lord—purse, wallet or travelling-bag, sword—are in themselves sufficient for a general inventory of the active powers to which His religion lays claim, namely, those powers which men must put forth to gain a purse from which to give; those activities by which a man is trained as one who has taken his wallet and travelled among men, observing, intelligent, knowing the world, and understanding its opportunities; and those chivalric powers, too, which entitle a man to bear the sword—a high sense of duty, true courage, self-control, honour, endurance, the nerve to throw one's self in wherever needed. These three words, with all which they imply, are enough to include the sum of our active powers, which are to be consecrated, and which may find their full use in the Lord's service.

The Cost of Christ's Sword

Luke xxii. 36.—'He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.'

These are strange words to come from the lips of Jesus. Why, surely, we are accustomed to say, Christ is the Prince of Peace; He has come to set at rest the angry passions of men, to 'beat the swords into ploughshares.' What, then, can this word of His mean: 'He that hath no sword, let him sell his very garment, and buy one'? No words could be more warlike, more blood-thirsty, than these! They read rather like the war-cry of some Kosciusko or William Wallace, as he leads forth his men to a life-and-death struggle, than those of the Prince of Peace as He went forth to die.

Yes, the words are strange in the lips of the gentle Jesus, so strange that the disciples did not understand them at first. 'Lord, here are two swords,' they said, with that blundering stupidity which so often characterized them in the days of His flesh. 'It is enough,' said Jesus, and we can fancy Him smiling sadly at their dullness as He uttered the words. Two swords enough for twelve men! Two swords enough against an army! Yes, enough for those who are not going to fight. Enough for those who are going to use other weapons than

[1] Quoted in *The Record*, 24th July 1924.
[2] F. Theodore Woods, *Great Tasks*, 71.

sharpened steel. And He went out, and 'when he was at the place, he said, Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.'

That, then, was what our Saviour meant. As He spoke these words, He was standing at the supper table. The hour of sweet fellowship was swiftly passing. It was sweet while it lasted, but our Saviour reminds them it cannot always last. They must go out from the supper table to a cold world of hostility and trial. In that world they will need all the strength they can command to quit themselves like men, like good soldiers of Christ Jesus. Above all, they must be armed to meet it. They must count no price too great to purchase the sword that alone can win the battle. They must be ready to cast away their very garment if necessary in order to grasp the sword of the Lord and of victory. 'He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.'

The great thought, then, of these words is, 'The Cost of Christ's Sword.' There are two things Jesus teaches us here: first, that the Christian life is a long, hard battle; second, that if we want to win it we must count no sacrifice too great to buy the sword which alone can do so.

1. *The battle of the Christian Life.*—If our life is to be a true one it must have the element of battle in it. Is not that a truth even of our common life; even of the struggle to win our daily bread? So we might say that this is a parable teaching the young that before they can ever win the prizes of life, they must learn to sacrifice everything to the sword that is to win them. The biographies of our successful men, whether in business, letters, or art, nearly all begin with one chapter, the chapter of youthful privation. They tell of the young man who was willing to endure poverty and hardship, who pinched himself in dress, starved in a garret, in order that he might gather the little money that was needed to start in business or support his body in life while the mind was perfecting the great invention, composing the wonderful book, painting the glowing picture. Life was to him a struggle, long and hard, and he was able to win it only by selling his very garments in order to buy the sword of victory.

¶ Then we were poor—poor, I imagine, to a degree quite unknown now. In such a matter it is well to have definite figures, and as I have a lively recollection of my expenses, I will set them down. I had an attic of my own, serving the purpose of sitting-room and bedroom, for four shillings a week. My bill for food amounted to another four shillings, and it was expected that all my expenses of every kind should be covered by two shillings more, and this was done. My bursary of £11 a year paid the fees, and left a little over; and I received in addition boxes from home containing fowls, oatcakes, eggs, and other edibles. These presents were very acceptable, and country students almost invariably imparted them generously to their friends when they arrived. There were students to my knowledge who had a whole pound a week to spend, but this was uncommon and was considered luxurious and extravagant. There were students even poorer than myself, and I am firmly convinced that one, who was not in my class though well known to me, died of sheer starvation.[1]

The heights by great men reached and kept
  Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
  Were toiling upward in the night.

But Christ would tell us here of a battle far more glorious than the battle for money or fame: the battle of the Lord, 'the good fight,' the winning of which will give us no mere corruptible 'crown' but that 'amaranthine wreath' which Paul tells us is 'laid up' for all who like himself have kept the faith.

What is that fight? Let the Apostle himself describe it in his imperishable language. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities . . . against the rulers of the darkness . . . against spiritual wickedness in high places.' Yes, every man's heart is a battlefield in which there contend 'hosts encountering hosts.' There is a holy war going on in every soul. How often have we gone forth determined to conquer the evil in our hearts, determined to be pure and temperate, determined to overcome those passions which war against us so cruelly and drag us down time after time. But alas! we failed. The old temptation returned with accumulated force. 'The evil that I would not, that I do.' What is the meaning of it? Does it mean Christ cannot save us?

[1] T. H. Darlow, *William Robertson Nicoll*, 18.

There is no such word as failure in the vocabulary of Christ. It was said of William of Orange that his defeats were greater triumphs than his victories. He never knew when he was beaten. There was a deathless hope about the man that could rally the forces when the battle was lost, and win it when the foe was singing their triumph song. Such is the hope Christ has brought to man. 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy,' He has enabled him to say; 'when I fall I shall arise.'

But while Christ has thus brought to man the secret of a deathless hope it is no less true that before we can claim that hope we must be prepared to make certain sacrifices.

2. *The sacrifices of the Christian life.*—The seriousness of the battle is shown by the sacrifices it demands—'let him sell his garment, and buy one.'

(1) The garment is the symbol of *luxury*. On it is lavished much of the wealth and splendour of life. 'You can tell a man by his clothes.' So the Christian soldier must often dispense with life's luxuries, if he would win life's crown. He may not say much against these. They may be harmless enough in themselves. But for himself he feels that before he can buy his sword he must cast these away. He feels, for example, that he is in such a line of business with such temptations in it that his only way of safety is the way of total abstinence from these things. Or perhaps, better still, he cannot as a father see his children grow up to trifle with these dangerous indulgences by following his example. Or best of all, he cannot speak to a poor brother who is going down to ruin by the indulgence of what is only a harmless luxury to himself. And so with no violent feelings against the thing in itself, he yet feels it his duty, nay his necessity, to put away this thing. He must sell the garment of luxury to buy the sword of victory.

¶ When Mr Charrington was a young man he was faced with a problem that few would have the courage to meet. His father was one of the partners in the brewery firm of Messrs Charrington & Head, and it was only natural that Mr F. N. Charrington, his oldest son, should take his share in the business. But one day, outside a public-house owned by his firm, he saw a man knocking his wife into the gutter, which made him feel that by becoming a partner he would be responsible for such scenes. In thinking over that sight he said to himself: 'Well, you have knocked your poor wife down, and with the same blow you have knocked me out of the brewery business.' He refused to accept the position waiting for him, thus sacrificing, as his biographer says, a sum of a million and a quarter pounds.[1]

(2) Again, the garment is the symbol of *comfort*. We don't put on clothes primarily to look well. We put them on to keep out the cold wind and the chill rain. So we are taught here the still more searching truth, that so strenuous is the Christian struggle that sometimes a man must be prepared to sacrifice not merely his luxuries but his comforts as well to win it.

¶ Wendell Phillips in his student days at Harvard was an elegant patrician, a refined scholar, golden-tongued, enjoying ease and cultured society to his full content. But, as George W. Curtis tells us, one October day he saw Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist, assailed, kicked, dragged to jail by a furious mob for saying that a man's (and therefore a slave's) right to liberty was inherent and inalienable. That sight, the cause at stake, laid hold of his heart-strings. 'With the setting of that October sun vanished for ever the career of prosperous ease, the gratification of ordinary ambition.'[2]

(3) Or again, the garment is not merely a symbol of luxury and comfort, it is also a symbol of *propriety* or *respectability*.

¶ To Wesley and his comrades themselves the business of field preaching was at first utterly distasteful. John Wesley says he 'consented to become more vile' when he preached on the hillside at Kingswood. All the sensibilities of the strait-laced, order-loving High Churchman were shocked, in a word, by the experience of having to stand on common earth, while the wind blew on his bare head, and preach to a passing crowd. But Wesley, after his logical fashion, made up his mind once for all on this subject, and his conscience obeyed his logic. He was but following a great and sacred precedent in consenting in this fashion to become 'a fool for Christ's sake.'[3]

[1] J. Robson, *Ion Keith-Falconer of Arabia*, 42.
[2] R. E. Welsh, *Man to Man*, 234.
[3] W. H. Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 166.

Now, while we must not strain a parable too far, Christ would teach us here that there are times when, in attacking some great public abuse, a man may have to speak and act with a plainness that will shock the public mind. This is a delicate subject, and there will always be difference of opinion on special cases. Such, for example, as the way Mr Stead took up the question of public purity, many years ago, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Without expressing an opinion on individual cases we lay down a great principle, that there are times when a man, in his battle for righteousness, may be compelled to cast away the garment of propriety that he may buy the sword of victory.

It is said that St Francis' father once took him to court on the plea that his son had left his house and taken his father's property with him. 'What have I taken?' said Francis. 'Why, the very clothes on your back are mine,' said the father. 'Then,' said the great renunciant, 'I give them back!' and disappearing out of the court he returned with the garments a few moments later, stark naked. 'We Christians,' said Hugh Price Hughes once, 'must make ourselves a public nuisance, till we have put down every other nuisance.' That is perhaps the best modern setting of this parable. In our battle for purity and righteousness, we must be ready, like the old British tars, to strip to the waist as we go into action; we must, like the old Hebrew prophets, be prepared to sacrifice even the garment of propriety, that we may wield the sword of the Lord and of victory.

Christ among the Transgressors

Luke xxii. 37.—'He was reckoned among the transgressors.'

Isaiah liii. 12.—'He was numbered with the transgressors.'

This quotation by Jesus in the Upper Room marks His sense of the change which the reversal of His own fortunes must work for the disciples. When their Master was the popular prophet of Galilee, they had everywhere found themselves welcome and honoured guests. Now that He was hunted as a criminal, they would find themselves suspects, regarded as dangerous to society. Thus 'numbered among the transgressors' gives us at the outset a wonderful glimpse into that great heart which, in the hour of its supreme self-sacrifice, yet had leisure to feel His own shame for their sakes.

To us, as we look back through so long a stretch of time to those days, the words are the statement of a most obvious fact. Whatever else may be true or untrue about Jesus, it is certainly true that He was numbered with the transgressors. In what biography of the same length shall we find so many accusations? He was accused of Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, gluttony, blasphemy; rebellion against the Romans, desecration of the Temple, subversion of the Jewish law. He was called a fraudulent agent of the devil, a friend of publicans and sinners, an enemy of His country and of the human race. Barabbas was accounted innocent in comparison with Him, and He was crucified between two thieves.

So it comes to pass that age after age, looking back, sees Jesus embedded in the sin of the world. The Jews have so far had their way, and have fixed upon Him 'the climax of reproach.' The believing world has seen in Him not merely the exhibition of God's love and pity for those stricken by sin, but His identification of Himself with the sin that had stricken them. 'Christ was not merely made man, He was made *sin* for us.'

We have, indeed, little understanding of that great and dark saying. It opens a vista into the nethermost mystery of iniquity, the fathomless tragedy and reserve of darkness. Yet, practically, we may understand it well. Where is Christ to-day? It is asked by unbelievers puzzled with intellectual difficulties; by believers who have lost their first love. Where is He? Why, among the transgressors. You have cried, 'Oh that I knew where I might find him,' and have sought for Him among good resolutions, respectabilities, endeavours after a Christian life. Certainly He is there, but it is not always easy to find Him there. There is one place where you are sure of finding Christ. Take conscience for your guide and go down among your sins. Seek for Him among the transgressors.

Why was Jesus Christ numbered with the transgressors? The answer is threefold.

1. *To fulfil the law of God.*—There is no possibility of avoiding the thought of law in this text. The word 'transgressors' implies

it, and is meaningless without it. Christ's constant aim was to fulfil the law, and His repudiation of the dead letter only left the spiritual law more binding than before.

To-day we shrink from stating Christianity in the formally forensic terms which have sometimes expressed it. We fall back on the fatherhood of God, and think all our thoughts in the light of that. Yet in this transition there is no escape from law. The law of fatherhood shows sin not as an insult to God's authority but as a wound to His heart; and so our sins are brought rather into the light of His countenance than before His judgment bar. Law is thus, as it were, absorbed into the very nature and being of God. The law of God is just God Himself, the Father.

How, then, will God deal with transgression? Obviously as a father He cannot leave it alone. No father dare neglect the sin of his child. So, by the law of fatherhood, God must deal with the sin of man. It can never be a light thing.

> It is by no breath,
> Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation
> joins issue with death.

It was in this dreadful sense that Isaiah had already conceived the agony of God, and that bold conception had arisen from human experience. There were many sin-bearers in Israel, feeling the weight and horror of other men's transgression. There were men who knew what it was 'to stoop, and take upon your heart as your business and burden man's suffering and sin . . . to seek to lift the deadness of men, to take their guilt upon your heart, to attempt to rouse them to it, to attempt to deliver them from it.' It is the story of all philanthropy. All purity, freedom, truth, good conscience, peace, have been bought with the blood of sin-bearing men who have loved their fellows even unto death. The law of fatherhood extends beyond that one relation, and renders vicarious sacrifices universal in the higher ranks of existence.

It is fatuous to ask whether this is a just law. It is far more than just, it is Divine. And all the sin-bearers of the earth are but dim shadows of the crucified Christ, in whom we see the sin of the children smiting full upon the Father's heart. Calvary offers the supreme example of God's faithfulness to His fatherhood, and reveals how all transgression affects the Father.

2. *To get in among them.*—The world was full of transgressors, and yet each one of them was lonelier than if there were only himself in it. The loneliness of sin is the sorest and most oppressive of all forms of that strange but well-known phenomenon, the loneliness of the crowd. Jesus knew that ghastly solitude in which the spirits of the transgressors dwelt isolated and cut off from their fellows. He knew how they needed Him, and He went to them.

But how awful an experience this was, other lives than His can but faintly indicate. A man who finds himself for the first time in prison knows it as he looks round upon his companions and realizes that he is now one of these. The terrible conscience of childhood knows it, when the first conscious battle against temptation is lost, and the child feels himself for the first time a member of that company of dark characters, the transgressors. He, not content with showing compassion from a distance toward the sinful, went where they were, descending into the hell of conscience. He looked up at life from the bottom of the pit where they lay, and each transgressor knew that he was understood. And that marvellous companionship endures.

3. *To reduce their number.*—As we read the *Inferno* of Dante, the feeling that grows more and more overwhelming is the sense of helplessness. He talks with the tortured spirits and hears what they have to tell, he scorns the meaner and weeps with the nobler of them, but he emerges from the nether world alone. He saves himself: others he cannot save, and they remain transgressors still.

But the crowd which Christ has entered is a diminishing crowd, its numbers lessening day by day. The Cross of Christ is 'finishing transgression and making an end of sin.' He shares with the transgressors their temptation, sin, shame, dread, repentance; one thing He does not share — their helplessness. Here, among those spirits in prison, is universal helplessness. They rebel against their evil ways, they are ashamed and disgusted with themselves, they long in vain after goodness, but they remain transgressors and they will transgress again. Christ stands among them, alone

only in this, that He is stronger than transgression. Even at the deepest point of His sin-bearing there was in Him the tremendous certainty that He was bearing sin away. Among the helpless here is the mighty Helper, come among them not to sympathize only but to set free.

The prophet sounds his grandest note of victory when he says, 'He has his portion with the great, he divides the spoil with the strong.' Who, then, are the great and strong in this world? Assuredly its sin-bearers. Those are not the really great ones who have risen by the fall of others, or made a desolation and called it peace: but those who have gone deepest into the wrongs and the vices of the world, and cleansed it from their stain. The heroes are the liberators, who have set the world free, and taught it to hope. With them Christ divides the spoil. Nay, rather He is *the* liberator, and the best of the others but catch a few crumbs from His table.

¶ I have often been struck by the resemblance between the late Mr Cecil Rhodes and the late Dr Hudson Taylor. Both these men possessed the same kind of qualities; both were cast in the same mould. Cecil Rhodes, directed by a strange though quite unselfish passion for the expansion of the British Empire, and for painting part of the map of the world in British red, gave his life to that end. And South Africa, with its history of fomented racial animosities, and questionable justice, and gold lust, and ruthless exploitation, and costly war, and still uncertain final loyalties, is the result.

Hudson Taylor dedicated himself to the service of the Redeemer and the extension of His rule. That lonely man, who, sixty years ago on Brighton beach, prayed that his loneliness might be ended by the gift of willing workers to go out and work in inland China, lived to see every province in China opened to the gospel, mission stations dotting the map like stars in a black sky, thousands brought under the sway of Christ's rule, and the Kingdom of God an actual reality in the land of Sinim. Even now there is no comparison between those two lives in regard to their ultimate values. Every year fades the memory and diminishes the influence of the man buried on the Matoppo Hills. To this present generation he is only a name. But every year presents the glory and greatness of the other man in clearer prominence.[1]

Here, then, is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Good news! He has fulfilled the law, the human and Divine law of Fatherhood. Better news! He understands the worst, and stands side by side with the rest of us, entangled in the dark web of sin and conscience. Best news of all! He is a match for our sin, mighty to save. We may be free who have been bondmen; we may arrive who have sighed in vain for any moral progress. The life we long for lies open to our feet, for He was numbered with the transgressors.

Temptation

Luke xxii. 40.—'Pray that ye enter not into temptation.'
1 Cor. x. 13.—'There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear.' (R.V.)

By 'entering into' temptation our Lord means something more than simply encountering it in our path. He means yielding to its baneful influence and pernicious drawing.

The possibility, nay, the likelihood, of temptation is involved in the fact that we are what we are, and the world we live in is such as it is. For we carry about with us corrupt and depraved hearts. We are born into a fatal heritage of evil desire. 'There is none that doeth good, no, not one.' And, on the other hand, the world, according to the consistent testimony of Scripture, is itself conceived as at enmity with God, and along with 'the flesh' and 'the devil,' 'the world' is regarded as the most potent incitement to sin. If we had pure and stainless hearts, or if the world were a world in harmony with God, temptation would not arise; but being what we are, and the world being such as it is, temptation is likely, nay, certain, to meet us.

1. *Occasion to be avoided.*—In face of the danger arising from temptation, what are we to do? First of all, and for this we have our Lord's authority and warrant, we must avoid all possible occasion of temptation. 'Take what way we can to heaven,' said an old Scotch saint, 'the way is hedged with crosses.' But while temptation is likely, nay, certain, to meet

[1] J. S. Holden, *The God-Lit Road*, 165.

us, we can by our conduct either multiply or diminish the occasions of temptation. And the first thing we have to do is to see to it that we incur no risk of temptation that we can possibly avoid.

The truly brave man is not the man who laughs at temptation, but the man who is brave enough to recognize his own weakness and be afraid of it. The truly wise man is not the man who is always trying to see how near he can come to the edge of a precipice without falling over. The truly wise man is the man who keeps as far away from the edge as he can. And in exactly the same way the truly brave man is the man who fears temptation and gives it a wide berth.

We want above everything else a baptism of 'godly fear.' We want courage enough to be able to say, when invited to do this or that, 'I cannot—I am afraid.' Mr Fearing, in John Bunyan's allegory, reached the Celestial City in safety; but the last view we have of Presumption is in that valley but a little beyond Interpreter's House, where he lies fast asleep and with fetters on his heels.

2. *Temptation common to man.*—But supposing, as will of necessity happen, in spite of all our efforts, we find ourselves face to face with temptation; what then?

First of all remember this, and say it to your soul again and again, that no temptation meets us but 'such as man can bear,' or, in Dr Charles Edwards' translation, such as is 'common to man.' It is soothing to one's pride to believe that no one ever had such temptations as we; but the Bible does not leave us that rag of comfort. 'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man.' All talk about extraordinary temptation is the veriest cant and the most pitiable pretence. People made the excuse long ago, and the Apostle retorted upon them: 'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin.'

The *subtlety* of temptation is often pleaded in extenuation of a fall.

¶ This is a description of the fascination of the pitcher plant—called by the natives of Borneo 'Satan's Jugs.' 'It cannot be doubted that insects must be attracted towards the pitchers of the *Nepenthes*, considering all the artifices and inducements brought into play—the strange shapes of the pitchers, their bright colours, and, above all, the glands disseminated around, affording all kinds of sweetmeats, to tempt and lure the insects to perdition. Of this kind are the glands which are in the inner part of the lid of the pitcher, where, if a greedy and imprudent insect tries to rest, it is almost certain to be trapped. But where Nature has shown all her refinement of perfidy is in the disposal of those baits within and around the rim of the pitchers. All the ornamental appendages, grooves, enlargements, rings, points, etc., found there, have no other end than the leading the insect toward the lower inverted portion within these appendages, where is a gland secreting nectar, placed in such a position that if an insect reaches it, it almost certainly loses its balance and falls into the well prepared to receive it. Once in there, it cannot escape, and is drowned in the liquid.'[1]

Are we, then, to conclude that the temptations of human life are of a similar infernal complexity, and that we are ensnared by devices of confounding ingenuity? It is not so. For the most part the temptations of men are simple enough, obvious enough.

The *intensity* of temptation might be excessive, and justly provoke protest. If objects of extraordinary beauty or greatness, of preciousness or enjoyment, were dangled before our senses until our imagination was kindled, our heart agitated, our passions inflamed, much might be urged on our behalf when we failed in the trying hour. And temptation is often pictured as though it were thus dazzling. But it is not so. The temptations which work the ruin of tens of thousands are utterly destitute in themselves of any special grandeur, glory, beauty, or delight. They are usually commonplace, and frequently mean and coarse. There is no need to spread a Belshazzar's feast to excite the appetite; a mess of pottage will suffice.

¶ The order of things consents to virtue. Such scenes as luxurious poets and novelists often paint, where temptation has a quite overcoming force, never, or very rarely, occur in real life.[2]

3. *Temptation to be conquered.*—There is no positive comfort in the assertion that our temptations are common to men. When some

[1] O. Beccari, *In Great Forests of Borneo.*
[2] Emerson.

one tried to comfort Tennyson in his grief for Hallam by reminding him that 'loss was common to the race,' the poet's retort, you remember, was this: 'That loss is common would not make my own less bitter, rather more.' But there is a truth which is of unspeakable comfort to those who are in the midst of manifold temptations, namely, that every temptation is to be overcome. We must make that belief our very own, if we are to emerge victorious out of our conflicts with temptation. To those who are down, who are dead beat, who are almost tempted to give up, we must say again and again, every temptation—without any exception—is to be overcome

¶ Henry Drummond tells, in one of his books, a story about the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular campaign. He was trying to get his troops into a place of safety, and between him and their safety ran a deep and rapid river. Neither bridge nor ford could be seen, and it was a hostile country; he sent his men up and down the side of the river to hunt for a bridge or a ford, and they found none. So the Duke himself went to the top of a hill near-by, and looked through his telescope, and far away down the riverside he saw a town, and on the other side of the river he saw a straggling village, and he said, 'Now, between that town and that village there must be a bridge or a ford.' So when night came, he sent his soldiers in the silence and darkness to see, and they brought back the report: 'Yes, there is a ford.' He passed his army over that ford that night, and next morning they were all in the land of safety. The danger besetting us may be manifold and formidable, but remember this—*there is always a ford*!

Is it possible to live a holy life amid unclean surroundings? Yes, it is. For we read of some even in wicked Sardis who did not defile their garments; and we read of saints even in Cæsar's vile and unspeakable household. Even amid the rank corruption and unbridled profligacy of Charles II's court, Mary Godolphin grew up like a pure white flower. Is it possible to stand one's ground as a Christian in face of adverse circumstances? Yes, it is. For we read of one Antipas, who was Christ's faithful witness even in Pergamum where Satan's seat was, and we read of the noble army of martyrs—Polycarp, Ignatius, Blandina, Felicitas, Ponticus, and others—who 'braved the tyrant's brandished steel, the lion's gory mane,' but who held fast their confession; and of others who had trials of mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment (of whom the world was not worthy), but who never denied the Name.

4. *The faithfulness of God.*—And the ground and reason for our confidence that every temptation can be overcome is that God is faithful. 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.'

Notice, the Apostle does not give as his reason for confidence that man is strong, but that God is faithful. Men who have faced temptation confiding only in their own strength have come to hideous ruin. It is the men who, distrustful of self, have leaned upon God who have come off more than conquerors. And that is what we want to remember in face of the fierce trials and temptations of life, that God is on our side.

What attitude, then, shall we take up towards temptation? Conscious of our own weakness, we will seek whenever possible to escape it. But if escape it we cannot (and escape it completely no man possibly can), we will face it with courage and high hope, leaning upon God, and looking to Him for power.

¶ There is a picture by one of our great artists of a young knight on the verge of a dark wood through which he has to pass. That wood contains all manner of lurking perils and stealthy enemies, and before entering it the young knight has taken off his helmet, and is pouring out his soul in prayer. And the legend at the foot of the picture is this: 'Into Thy hands, O Lord.' We, too, stand like that young knight, face to face with all manner of dangers and perils; fierce and deadly temptations of many a kind will assail us as we make our way through the mystic wood. What better can we do than commit ourselves into the keeping of the same gracious and mighty God? 'Into thy hands we commit ourselves.'

Temptation

A Sermon to the Young

Luke xxii. 40.—'Pray that ye enter not into temptation.'
Luke xxii. 46.—'Rise and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' (R.V.)

There is not a heart among us but has been struck by the fiery arrow of temptation. As surely as each is born, and as surely as each shall die, so surely is each tempted. We all join hands in that.

1. Of course *temptations are not all alike*. No two of us are tempted in precisely the same way. Each of us carries the cravings, the passion-germs, perhaps the sins, of his ancestry in his being and his blood. Sire, grandsire, and their sires again have handed on their legacy to us. And we, who thought to find ourselves in opening life free and unfettered, find ourselves heirs to a forgotten past. Does that, then, mean that the past determines our fate? Not so. But it means the past determines our trial.

There is another fact also which must not be lost sight of. Each of us determines by his conduct of to-day what form the temptations of to-morrow shall assume. Every stage of our life sets the problems of the stage which follows it, and our behaviour in youth decides how much our manhood is to be harassed and distracted from the duties which await it. You have now the temptations of your manhood in your own power. Manhood is coming to you with its discovery of destiny and a vocation; with its clear issues and responsibilities; with its summons to a warfare, beyond that of your own character, in the great crusades of Christ. To-day you have it in your power to determine whether you will meet these crises with the full resources of your nature: whether these great issues will come to you as they came to Jesus, with no shame to fill your heart, no terror, no recollection of former betrayals on your part, and no irredeemable compromises with the world; or whether you must face them distracted, hampered, and abashed by the self-indulgence or the meanness of the years through which you now move.

2. *Guidance in resisting temptation.*—What shall we say?

(1) *Resist beginnings.* Tamper not. Handle not. A child can dam the streamlet at its source, but the sons of Anak cannot stop it when it becomes a river. Do not deliberate how far you can go without falling. You have gone far enough if you are not to fall.

¶ Livingstone tells us about a clever dragon-fly in Africa which catches its prey by appealing to its curiosity. When it is in the grub stage it feeds upon ants, and it catches them by putting its head into the ground and waving its tail in the air. The ants come near to examine this strange sight and are immediately seized by the grippers with which the tail is furnished. In the same way a great many people have been ruined just by going to see what evil is like.

Continue to resist. The battle's never over. There's many a soul been lost, because it won. Won in the first onset, then said, All's well, and became careless. But the angels are gathering for war again, and the soul is taken after all. It is not always the first or second or third attack that works the havoc. For then the man is fresh and watchful. It is when the heart is careless again, and has forgotten the sting of the old sin, *that* is the moment of danger. How often are you to forgive? Till seventy times seven. Just so often must you resist. Not once, not twice, not in fine moments and noble hours alone, but daily, drearily, determinedly, forgive your brother and fight your foe.

(2) *Fill your mind* as much as you can, occupy your energies *with whatsoever things are true, honourable, pure, and lovely.* Your thoughts make you or mar you. It is obvious that we cannot occupy our minds with foul things without being the worse for it: we cannot read a bad novel, or see a prurient play without stain and smirch of soul. And let it also be said that it does not much matter that the novelist makes virtue triumph at the end of his book, or that the playwright kills off all the bad people in the fifth act. The evil of the thing lies in our consorting with vicious creatures, in our admitting to the brain vile salacious people with whom in real life we would, of course, have nothing to do. They remain in the brain, and taint our imagination. Fill up the blanks of life. It is there that mischief lurks. When the ship has no way on, the rudder has no power. Yoke yourself to some fine cause that has hard struggle before it; link your-

self to some high endeavour which as yet the general public is far from accepting.

(3) Finally *pray*. That was the counsel that our Lord gave; that was the practice that He followed. What we call the 'Lord's Prayer' was the echo of His own struggles—'tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' John Milton was profoundly right when he fixed on the Temptation as the subject of his 'Paradise Regained,' for that was the crisis of Jesus' life, and in that crisis began that perfect sacrifice which meant doing the Will of God. Christ was continually in prayer. What He needed so much, we dare not dispense with! Pray!

¶ A good old man tells us how, when he was a small boy, a minister came to his home and gave him a piece of wise advice which he never forgot. 'When in trouble,' he said, 'kneel down and ask God's help; but never climb over the fence into the devil's ground and then kneel down and ask help. Pray from God's side of the fence.'

As you know your powers and your weaknesses, pray God save you from those extremities of temptation in which your worse tendencies grow so strong. 'Save me from that hour.' Pray! And yet the trial may come (you say)? Yes. But the fight is very different when we have prepared ourselves by prayer to meet it. He who prays weaves a network of restraint about himself. It is not easy to ruin him with whom the pressure of Christ's hand yet lingers in the palm. He will not 'blind his soul with clay.'

Pray! A vessel may carry plenty of boats, hanging on the davits, ready for any emergency. But unless boats are ready for being lowered straight away, and unless men are drilled for their instant use, such provision is vain. Peril needs swift decision. The gravest temptations come suddenly, and when you are face to face with danger there is no opportunity for preparation. Prepare for the unknown by prayer.

¶ I remember some years ago climbing the Weisshorn, above the Zermatt Valley, with two guides. There had been a series of severe storms, and ours was the first ascent for some weeks. Consequently we had a great deal of step-cutting to do up the main *arête*. We had left the cabin at two in the morning, and it was nearly nine before we reached the summit, which consisted, as on so many peaks in the Alps, of splintered rocks protruding from the snow. My leading guide stood aside to let me be first on the top. And I, with the long labour of the climb over, and exhilarated by the thought of the great view awaiting me, but forgetful of the high gale that was blowing on the other side of the rocks, sprang eagerly up them, and stood erect to see the view. The guide pulled me down—'On your knees, Sir; you are not safe there except on your knees.'[1]

The Inimitable Christ

Luke xxii. 41.—'And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed.'

Matt. xxvi. 36.—'Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.'

Mark xiv. 34.—'Tarry ye here, and watch.'

In every well-furnished library there is a copy of the *De Imitatione Christi*, by Thomas à Kempis. He was a priest in the convent of Mount Saint Agnes; a mystic, a dreamer of dreams and seer of visions. He lived in troublous times. The Reformation was beginning to turn the world upside down. The mind and conscience of the people were in revolt against ecclesiastical tyranny. France and England stood at swords' points. Great problems were being broached in Church Councils. The Inquisition was getting under way; swords were flashing; faggot fires were kindling. But Thomas à Kempis was withdrawn from these things. The placid, blue-eyed old man was illuminating missals in the cloister and writing *The Imitation of Christ*. His book has been translated into more languages than any other except the Bible, and has had an inestimable influence over the minds of men.

The importance of imitating Christ cannot be emphasized too deeply; but it may be misapprehended. There is an imitable and also an inimitable Christ. Up to a certain point we may approach Him in affectionate fellowship, but beyond that we must needs stand still and adore. Draw near—but not too near!

1. A difficulty presents itself in connection with His singular *Personality*. He was, and is, God and Man knit together. As such He stands alone and singular.

[1] G. A. Smith, *The Forgiveness of Sins*, 87.

On His human side He cannot be approached too near. A woman who was a sinner came to Him once, as He sat at meat, and, breaking an alabaster box of precious ointment, anointed His feet. His disciples exchanged glances of disapproval, but He said, 'Let her alone, she hath wrought a good work on me.' The time came, however, when Mary of Magdala would have embraced His feet, and He forbade her saying, 'Touch me not!' Something had happened in the meantime which had placed a profound emphasis on His Godhood, in view of which her gratitude must be commingled with the utmost self-abasement and reverent adoration.

Jesus is ever, on His Godward side, at an infinite remove from us. He calls us near, as He invited Thomas to thrust his finger into the print of the nails; yet in the very front of His infinite kindness we withdraw our hands and drop our eyes, dazzled by the effulgence of His glory, crying, like Thomas, 'My Lord and my God!'

2. How far may we imitate Christ's *Teaching*? It is written, 'He taught not as the scribes—that is, by reference to tradition and precedent—but with authority.' The word is *exousia*, meaning literally, 'from within.' In other words, He drew from an inward and inexhaustible source of truth. His word was 'Yea' and 'Amen,' and 'Verily, verily, I say unto you!' It is apparent that, at this point, He parts company with us.

In our teaching of spiritual things there are two possible extremes. One is a certain vagueness of ambiguity. And of this the world is weary. The other extreme is dogmatism. And no man can safely dogmatize. That which was sublimely impressive in Christ becomes grotesque in any other. The true gospeller, however, speaks with positiveness by leaning on the authority of Christ.

3. As to His wonderful *Works*: these also were singular and, in so far as they were miraculous, inimitable. He wrought these wonders in His own name and by His own power. The Apostles were endued with *charismata* or spiritual gifts, by which they also were enabled to work miracles. These were necessary in the formative period of the Church. Let it be observed, however, that the Apostles, even with this peculiar endowment, did not undertake to work miracles by any indwelling power, but only in Jesus' name. As Peter and John were passing through the Gate Beautiful they said to the cripple, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk!' It is an open question whether or not miracles are wrought in our time. There is indeed no lack of 'testimonials.' Without investigating the authenticity of these miracles let us say that there is at least one miracle possible to the humblest of the followers of Christ—Conversion. And this is the most important and stupendous of all. To open blind eyes or heal sickness, to prolong life for an hand-breadth at best, is an insignificant matter in comparison with the bringing of a soul out of darkness and the shadow of death into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God. 'He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins.' Yet this miracle is not of ourselves. 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.'

4. We come now to the *Character* of Jesus: and here also He is infinitely removed from us. He was in all points such as we are only without sin. *Only* without sin? O mighty stone's cast! What a gulf of separation is opened in those words! He stands by Himself saying, 'Who layeth anything to my charge?'

All true character is righteous; and all righteousness is light; and the one central source of light is the sun. Our Lord is the Sun of Righteousness; as He said, 'I am the light of the world.' But He also said concerning us, 'Ye are the light of the world'; that is, we are planetary souls, borrowing from Him as we revolve about Him. The moon says, 'If I cannot be a sun, I can turn my face towards the sun and partake of its radiance; and I can look downward on the earth to illuminate the paths of such as travel through the night.' And this marks our nearest approach to the righteousness of Christ. 'Ye are the light of the world; let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify God.'

5. Now as to the *Death* of Christ: there was never another like it. Of all the martyrs who, in devotion to truth and the welfare of their fellow-men, have faced the sword and blazing

faggots, not one has ever died like Him. The distinguishing feature of His death was its vicariousness; He took the place of sinners before the offended Law. He bared His heart to the shaft that was intended for them. 'He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; and by his stripes we are healed.'

¶ All men die. If death is a stupendous solemnity, it is, viewed from another angle, a trite and hackneyed commonplace. But no man has died like Christ. Consider the essential improbability—impossibility, we had almost said—of His death. Godhead is joined with manhood in Him; and it is the strangest of strange happenings that God should die. We cannot fathom it. Perforce, we stand about a stone's-cast off. Vaguely and dumbly we feel what self-abnegation and what love are here. Consider the unshackled freedom of His death. We go, because we must. He went, because He would. His heart was in that awful crucifixion outside the gate. His will willed it, not through His brief earthly ministry merely, but from His eternal past: He is the Lamb slain in purpose and intention from the foundation of the world. He lays down His life spontaneously, generously, as a Priest does, as a Prince does. In the Latin Father's phrase, He is both Victim and Victor. Consider the unplumbed sorrow of His death. Death has its sadness always, if not for those who are gone into the world of light, then for those who sit lingering here; it never fails to drape some hearts in black. But our sadness, when it is most shattering, is not to be mentioned in the same breath with His. Christ's is the grief of the Holy One round whom the sins of the chief of sinners accumulate and gather. It is the orphanhood of the Perfect Son who passes out, bearing our iniquities, into a darkness where even the face of the Father is hidden. The sounding-lead of strongest thought, simplest faith, deepest penitence, warmest love, has never touched, nor ever will, the bottom of these seas. But consider, too, the unmeasured harvests of His death. Many deaths are fruitful—the soldier's, maintaining the good name of his country, and guarding her liberties 'at life's dear peril'; the martyr's, witnessing to truth on the scaffold; the missionary's, whose sepulchre claims the heathen soil for his Master, Christ. But Christ's own death bears fruit more inexhaustible. All sons and daughters in the family of God; all holy men and women; all ambassadors of the King, whose testimony and labour are compelling the deserts to blossom as the rose; all citizens of the New Jerusalem who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and who, as Rabbi Duncan said, are 'prouder of the redness than the whiteness'—these are its harvest.[1]

Nevertheless here is the pre-eminent glory of our humanity; that we may come thus far; that we may tarry on the verge of the shadows and watch with Christ. We are not asked to do more than is possible. But in this approach to Jesus, in this sympathy with His expiatory suffering, we become labourers together with God.

We return now to the thought that Christ is 'the only-begotten Son of God.' Only-begotten! There is a world of meaning there. We, too, are sons of God. We are doubly sons, by creation and by adoption. But there is one who is God's Son by eternal generation; and therein He is at an infinite 'stone's cast' from us. But, in our filial relation with Him as the 'first-born among many brethren,' we shall come nearer and nearer for ever and ever: as it is written, 'Now are we sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

Gethsemane

Luke xxii. 41-44.—'And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.'

The little enclosed garden, planted with straggling olive trees, was a favourite resort of our Lord. It was a place of quiet, especially at this time, amid the clamour of the droves of foreign pilgrims who jostled each other through the streets of the city. We may imagine it as a private garden on the hillside of Olivet, perhaps the property of a secret friend, a place certainly

[1] A. Smellie, *The Well by the Way*, 48.

where He was welcome and where He could be sure of seclusion and quiet. By the sacred association of memory, places may come to have a peculiar message for the human heart.

So for the last time, as to a remembered place, Jesus turned towards Gethsemane, the garden of Olives. Like a wounded stag making for the high slopes, He set out for this quiet garden, where He could face His great hour alone. He had a tryst with God and His own soul.

¶ We might practise the same habit with advantage in our Christian life; in addition to the custom of public worship, it would be well for us to endeavour to connect our private devotion with definite places, either inside a room of the house or outside with Nature, like Jonathan Edwards, who paced the banks of the Hudson, and Leighton, who walked up and down beside the Allan Water. Human nature has a strange faculty for hallowing its surroundings. They speak to us of strength and peace and reverence, just on account of their associations with a secret experience which is between us and God.[1]

1. Let us study this solemn and sacred hour in the human life of the Lord Jesus—this hour He spent in the Garden of Gethsemane. Nowhere else, if we will, can we come nearer to our Master. Nowhere else does He admit us into closer communion with Himself. Nowhere else does He reveal to us more clearly the great purpose for which He came into the world, and what the accomplishment of that purpose cost Him.

Let us think for a moment by what means we could come to know a person's real nature or character most truly and most thoroughly. Suppose we could hear their private prayers—not the kind of prayers which too many of us are apt to whisper hurriedly by our bedside morning and evening, and which may no more represent our real prayers than may the 'Amen' mechanically repeated at the end of collects which have been said by the minister in church, but to which we have paid little or no attention. But suppose a person should be in the midst of some terrible crisis in his life; suppose that in agony of spirit he went apart, and, alone in the presence of God, poured out to Him the very depths of his soul. Suppose we were to hear such a prayer as that, should we not be justified in saying that there, if anywhere, we should have a revelation of his real nature or character? But this is exactly how, from the records of what took place in the Garden of Gethsemane, we are permitted to know the depths of the heart of the Lord Jesus. There, beneath the olive trees, He pours out, in the hour of the great crisis of His life, His whole soul in prayer to the Father; and—O inestimable privilege!—we are actually permitted to be with Him, to listen to Him, to watch Him, and if we will to learn from Him.

In the true prayers of a true man or woman there will be revealed what they would be, what they would have, and what they would do; and, consequently, what they feel they must possess in order to accomplish these. But in true prayer much more than even this will be revealed. We shall see the exact position of the suppliant towards God; we shall see his conception of his relationship to God; and this will reveal the nature and the reality of his faith. Prayer is the issue of faith, and faith must be based upon knowledge.

All these, then, are revealed to us in the prayer of the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane. His attitude or relationship towards God is that of the perfect Son to the perfect Father. His trust in His Father is absolute; and the one and all-comprehensive thought of His heart, as the one and all-sufficient purpose of His life, is the accomplishment of His Father's will. Here, as in every action of these last days of His earthly ministry, we must be careful to remember the complete and perfect humanity of the Saviour. As man He had entered into this world, as man He would win the victory over sin and death, and He would do this without any of those aids which we may term miraculous. Here, too, He was made like unto us His brethren. His one advantage over us is that His nature has never by sin been made more susceptible to the attacks of sin; His will has never been weakened by previous defeats under temptation. Let us, then, contemplate Him, in the sinless perfection of His human nature, kneeling in the perfectly right attitude or relationship of a perfect man, who is also a perfect Son of God, towards His heavenly Father. If only that word Father, with which His prayer opens, could mean to us what it meant to Him, how different not only our conduct but also our prayers would be!

[1] J. Moffatt, *Reasons and Reasons*, 79.

The completeness of our Lord's humanity is seen in the conditional request, 'If thou be willing.' We have here not only the physical, but also the moral, shrinking from death, the issue of sin, which we can conceive must to the sinless be utterly unnatural. But the request is only a conditional one: it is entirely conditional upon the Father's will. God's purpose, at whatever cost, must be fulfilled. Hence the resolution—in which we may say that a prayer for strength is also implied—'Thy will be done.'

Our very familiarity with these words may be a danger, and may cause us to forget all that they must mean. They certainly are a resolution; but the very attitude of our Lord involves their also containing a prayer for help to carry this resolution into effect. In the vision of the Angel strengthening the Saviour—whether the actual words be an early gloss or not—we have a true picture of spiritual strength being imparted to Him from His close communion with the Source of all strength.

2. 'Let this cup pass from me.' Jesus was in an agony. That word 'agony' is a very expressive one. To be in an agony is to be in the midst of a great struggle, a struggle whose intensity demands that every fibre of our nature—physical, mental, moral, and spiritual—is stretched to its utmost limit, in order not only to achieve victory, but to avert defeat. It is the condition of one who feels that the struggle in which he is engaged is one of life and death. Jesus felt that issues of infinite importance depended upon the result of that hour of agony, in fact nothing less than the eternal welfare of an innumerable multitude of human souls who should, in the ages to come, be born into the world.

¶ A soldier after years spent in the hottest parts of India went in winter straight to France. There he spent fifty-two hours in a trench filled with freezing water, and under a fire which scarce permitted of any movement. He was in the hospital suffering from the effect of it, days shot through with intense pain and nights of fitful snatches of sleep broken by almost unendurable pangs. After he had told of the horrible long nightmare of it, he added: 'But I am glad to have gone through it; I am glad to have lived to have this experience; I am glad to know what man can endure.' He did not mean that he was proud to have borne so much now that it was over. It was still very far from being over. Nor was there in his mind the dimmest thought of boasting. What he did mean was that he had passed through one of life's great unveiling experiences which had revealed to him, away down in his soul, deeper than his heavily distressed conscious mind, something which had not been troubled. This it is which may rest unshaken on the Eternal, even while all conscious thought is blackness of desolation.[1]

It does not lie with us even to imagine that we can understand a soul like His, or can comprehend the thoughts that passed through His mind. There are depths even in a fellow-man's suffering that we can never plumb. How much more with Christ? Yet it may be a spiritual gain for us to observe three things.

(1) Quite evidently, this was a passionate return of that inner debate which He had held with Himself in the contest in the Desert. There He had been tempted to accomplish His mission in different ways. Not necessarily evil ways, but ways that 'differed in excellence.' Indeed, the debate about possibilities was the soul of His temptation. Here again, as He faces the last things, He is tempted to ask Himself the same question. Is there no other way? Must He redeem the world thus? Is He shut up to the cross? In vision, He sees the Father holding out the cup in His hands for Him to take. But . . . but . . . is it possible for the cup to pass? Is there no other way? 'Let this cup pass from me.' That is a definite petition to God, a real anguished prayer. We can make nothing of these words that will be worthy either of Him or of the occasion unless we see that He was tempted, quite definitely, to let the cup pass.

It is a cheap gospel that makes the thorny way of duty easy for Jesus, as if it cost Him nothing. It cost Him blood and agonies and tears. What more could it cost Him? We can only value His finished work as we see the deep passion of debate. That He should debate it is no sin. That, having debated it, He should fully accept it crowns Him Christ.

Ye tired old olive-trees, rigid, as if in agony
Distorted, and so greyly wrinkled, why?

[1] J. Oman, *The Paradox of the World*, 106.

'Save for ourselves, He was alone in dim Gethsemane,
We were His comrades in the strife and victory.'[1]

(2) Bowed and prostrate there among the olive trees in agony this Dreamer hoped to win and redeem the world for God. So great a dream that it should be nobly fulfilled! . . . But look! To perfect this great dream, God was now offering Him a cross! This emblem of shame. A cross where they slew their rogues. When we contrast this starless night with the glorious dawn of the Baptism, we can understand the questioning in His heart. Is this the only means by which God can be perfectly obeyed? If this was the Father's chosen way of redeeming the world and answering Christ's glorious consecration, it was just a path of simple shame. Would Jesus accept it? He came to do the Father's will: but was there no other way? Must He walk this grim road?

O love of God! O sin of man!
In this dread act your strength is tried
And victory remains with love:
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified!

(3) We can only understand the agony of Jesus, when we relate it to what He thought of Himself. That alone gives us any glimpse of His mental and spiritual debate. The truth is Jesus regarded Himself in a unique way, a ransom for many. He read an unutterable meaning into His own sacrifice. For He regarded Himself, in His death, as carrying the sins of the world, and as being identified with His burden. He who knew no sin was made sin. And in His own mind it is the thought of the sin of the world that breaks Him down.

¶ 'He began to be sore amazed,' says the second Evangelist. There was nothing that could so sore amaze the Son of God, but only one thing. And that one thing was sin. Sin is so unspeakably evil, and so unspeakably awful in its evil, that it 'sore amazed,' and struck down the very Son of God Himself. He had been 'amazed' enough at sin before now. He had seen and He had studied all His days the whole malice and wickedness of the heart of man. It has been amazement and horror enough to stand and see deceit and envy and pride, and all of that kind, as He describes it in terrrible words, 'coming out of the heart' of man. But it was a new thing to our Lord to have all that poured in upon Himself. To be made sin 'amazed' our Lord; it absolutely overwhelmed Him—cast Him into 'an agony': it loaded Him and sickened Him, and slew Him, down to death and hell. A terror at sin and a horror: a terror and a horror at Himself—to absolute stupefaction—took possession of our Lord's soul when He was made sin. The only thing anywhere at all like His amazement and heaviness, and exceeding sorrow and anguish, is the amazement and the heaviness, and exceeding sorrow and utter anguish of God's saints; when, in their life of highest holiness and most heavenly service, they, at the same time, both see and feel that they are still 'made of sin,' as Andrewes has it. Their utter stupefaction of soul as they see all hell opening and pouring up its bottomless wickedness all over their soul—that is to taste something of what is behind of the 'amazement' of Christ.[1]

That He—the Son of man—should die—thus—for that! A cross—for that!

Nevertheless, Thy will be done.

[1] J. M. B., in *The British Weekly*, July 30, 1925.

Our Great High Priest

Luke xxii. 42.—'Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.'

On the great Day of Atonement, the High Priest entered the Holiest of all three times. First, he passed within the veil, carrying fire in the golden censer, and incense in his hands. There he cast the incense on the fire, and the cloud of it over-shadowed the Mercy Seat. He entered the second time within the veil bearing with him the blood of his own sin offering, which he sprinkled on his own behalf. Finally, he entered with the blood of a sin-offering for all the people. When in the fullness of time our High Priest came to the great Day of Atonement, He entered, in the excercise of His holy office, twice; once bearing with Him the incense and the fire, once with the sin-offering for all the people. He had no second entrance, such as Aaron had, being 'holy, guileless, undefiled, and separated from sinners.'

Let us borrow the symbolism of the ancient

[1] A. Whyte, *Lord, Teach us to Pray*, 135.

ritual and see the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane passing alone within the veil bearing the fire and the incense; and on Calvary's cross entering with the sin-offering for all the people. In the ancient ceremony the fire taken from the altar was the symbol of dedication; while the incense of sweet spices beaten very small was the symbol of the graces of character which make the one dedicated acceptable to God. In the going in of the priest both fire and incense were necessary. The incense must be cast upon the fire and consumed, suggesting the fact that the most perfect humanity must be abandoned to the will of God, and find its ultimate use in outpouring itself so that the purpose of the Most High might be fulfilled. And is this not exactly what took place in the Garden in the case of our Lord and Master? Here He reached the ultimate hour of His personal dedication.

The first recorded words of Jesus were, 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' Had we met Him anywhere and asked Him for the deepest reason of the journey He took, or the deed He wrought, or the word He spoke, He would ever have answered in the self-same words, 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.' In the process of that life of dedication He came again and again to the place of trial and testing where seducing voices sought to lure Him aside from the pathway; sometimes the voices of lovers and friends, sometimes the voices of foes; and yet with undeviating loyalty and magnificent determination His life was dedicated from first to last to the will of God.

But now in the Garden came the supreme and final test. Will the life so wondrously devoted be complete in devotion in this strange and awful hour?

Our High Priest, ere He passed within the veil to represent sinning men, entered Himself in His own right; no longer by an act of symbolism, but by the actuality of a personal experience, carrying the fire and the incense; and upon that consuming fire He cast the incense of His own sacrificial and beautiful and perfect life; and the cloud of it overshadowing the Mercy Seat was the prelude of His coming again with blood on behalf of sinning souls.

Keeping the symbolism of the incense, let us reverently attempt to observe the graces of our Lord, as they were revealed in Gethsemane; the consuming fire, as it was most evidently present; and then that activity, so awe-inspiring, by which the dedication of His personal life to the will of His God was brought to consummation and to glory.

1. Let us consider *the graces of the Lord* that this story reveals, recognizing all the time the impossibility of analysing a fragrance.

(1) We are impressed by His *majesty*. Let the word be delivered from all our false and materialistic ideas concerning it. It includes within itself the thought of dignity, but not of patronage; of aloofness with which no liberty can be taken in certain senses, but which is always near at hand in the hour of need: Majesty! It suggests what the Psalmist meant when long ago he said, 'The Lord reigneth; he is apparelled with majesty.' The majesty of Jesus is revealed in His knowledge of all the programme that lay ahead. He had been in the Upper Room; He had eaten with His disciples the ancient Passover; He had instituted the new feast, symbol of the new covenant; and then they had left the Upper Room, and walked down across the Kedron toward the shadows of Gethsemane. On the way He told them in language chosen from their own ancient Scriptures exactly what was about to happen. He had a perfect knowledge of the way along which He was going, and He had an absolute confidence in the issue of that through which He was about to pass. We see His majesty also in His demeanour in the presence of His enemies. Looking at the men who were in the Garden for His arrest, He said, 'Whom seek ye?' They said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' And He replied, 'I am!' And in a moment they fell backward. It was the glory of His majesty.

¶ We have a few examples in history of men whose presence had a somewhat similar effect on their fellows. It is told of the Roman Marius that, when he was in prison at Minturnae, Sylla gave orders that he should be put to death. A Gaulish slave was sent to dispatch him; but, at the sight of the man who had shaken the world, and who cried out, 'Fellow, darest thou to slay Caius Marius?' the soldier threw down his weapon and fled.

(2) Then we are impressed with His *meekness*. Again the word is not lightly chosen—it is the word He actually used of Himself when, in the midst of His public ministry, He said, 'I am

meek and lowly—that wonderful word that suggests strength harnessed for service, the meekness that is gentleness. And what is gentleness? Was it not George Matheson who once said that we use false figures when we speak of gentleness. We speak of the gentleness of the brook. The brook has no gentleness. It rushes on its way, and exerts its force over all the pebbles down the mountain-side. If you would know what gentleness is, behold the mighty ocean lulled to rest, the ripples of which kiss the golden sand and bathe the feet of the little child. What it might do! How it might spread rack and ruin. But its strength is held in check for service. That is meekness. 'Thy gentleness,' said an ancient singer,' hath made me great.' Now behold the meekness of the Man. It is revealed first in His sifting of His disciples, allowing none of them to come further than they were able to follow; Judas was excluded; then halting at the very portals of the Garden, He left eight of them behind, and only permitted three to go a little further with Him because they were better able to bear; until at last, knowing that He was about to enter where they could not follow, He left them, charging them to watch with Him, going alone Himself to face the unutterable sorrow. There is a wonderful revelation here of strength. Then, in dealing with their failure, mark the patience of His method; no angry word from beginning to end. Even in His rebuke of their sleeping He recognised their intention when He said to them, 'The spirit indeed is willing.'

(3) Further, we are impressed with His *sympathy*. What is sympathy? Bearing with another, feeling with another, entering into the experience of another, and sharing it. That was perhaps most wonderfully manifest at the last. 'Then cometh he to the disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.' Some expositors have declared that when He said, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest,' He spoke satirically to them because they were asleep. What misunderstanding of the Lord! Not satirically, but out of the fullness of His sympathy He said to them as, starting from their slumber at His return, they looked at Him, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest.' How long passed we cannot tell, but some time ere He woke them with the words, 'Behold, the hour is at hand. Arise, let us be going.' Jesus waited for them while they slept, knowing all they would have to undergo on the coming day.

Thou knowest, not alone as God All-Knowing,
  As man, our mortal weakness Thou hast proved
On Earth, with purest sympathies o'erflowing,
  O Saviour! Thou hast wept, and Thou hast loved:
And love and sorrow still to Thee may come,
And find a hiding-place, a rest, a home.[1]

(4) Deeper even than these are His *compassion and purity*. More profound than His pity or sympathy is His compassion. It is found everywhere, for compassion was the secret of His being in the Garden at all. With kindly and gracious irony, He spoke to the men who came to arrest Him, 'Are ye come out as against a robber with swords and staves to seize me? I sat daily in the temple teaching, and ye took me not;' which means: ye could not take Me till Mine hour was come. The reason of His being there was not that they had trapped Him, but that His compassion had compelled Him. Through all there is His awful purity and sinlessness—so patent that it almost seems irreverent to add it. Yet it was the strength of everything else.

Incense! We go back to the ancient economy and its pictures and find that the incense was compounded of sweet spices, permeated by the salt that purifies. Let the figure pass away, and we see in that garden One whose character is full of all gracious fragrance. It is He who is the glory of the scene; it is He who is the well-beloved of the Father.

2. And now we turn to *the symbolism of the fire*. It was the symbol of the will of God, which is the outcome of the nature of God. And the nature of God may be told in these words, 'God is love!' 'Our God is a consuming fire!' These are not two facts but one; two statements of one essential truth. He is love, and therefore He is fire. He is fire, because He is love. Mingling in the fire are the qualities of holiness and righteousness; and merging in the fire are the qualities of compassion and of mercy. Holiness, and righteousness, and mercy,

[1] Jane L. Borthwick

and compassion all proceed out of the infinite mystery of His nature. And these essential facts of the Deity of God reveal to us the secret of everything in this Man of His right hand; they discover the reason why He trod the sorrowful pathway to the Cross, and finally reached the Cross itself. Jesus Christ recognized He was in co-operation with God in the fulfilment of eternal purpose. The mastery of the will of God was upon His soul—it was always with Him. The zeal of God's house consumed Him. The fire was the will of God.

And so we reach that time of inward anguish, thrilling with power, upon which it seems that the cloud of the incense ever rests, so that the final thing can never be said concerning it. You will notice that three times over He cast His incense upon the fire. He took all of Himself, and abandoned it in devotion to the will of His God. He said to His disciples, 'My soul,' My life, 'is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' My life, My soul, all that I am. And He was called to that experience, called to endure it. And now behold Him within the veil in the presence of God, alone with God; the sense of the coming sorrow surging through and through Him: 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' This is but a revelation of His keen sense of the impending agony. The priest casts the incense on the fire! 'Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.' If this be Thy will, I consent to the bruising of My life, that the things which should make for all joy should experience all sorrow.

We do not read this story aright if we tarry over the words that indicate the appalling sense of coming sorrow! They did but serve as prelude to the final, utter, absolute devotion of Himself to the will of God.

'O Father! not my will, but Thine be done'—
So spake the Son.
Be this our charm, mellowing Earth's ruder noise
Of griefs and joys;
That we may cling for ever to Thy breast
In perfect rest![1]

[1] J. Keble.

Divine Amelioratives

A Meditation

Luke xxii. 45.—'Sleeping for sorrow.'

Let us think of the Divine graciousness, not of the element of human weakness, in this text.

'Sleeping for sorrow.' Is it not a very strange conjunction of words? One would have thought that wakefulness and sorrow would have been associated, and that sleep and sorrow would never have found communion. But here is sorrow passing into sleep! As though sorrow itself contains a gracious opiate which lulls and subdues into slumber. As though God had determined that every distress should carry a certain palliative in order that we might not be burdened beyond measure.

O sleep, sweet sleep!
Whatever form thou takest, thou art fair,
Holding unto our lips thy goblet filled
Out of Oblivion's well, a healing draught![1]

1. Let us consider some of the Divine amelioratives which the good Lord has appointed for reducing the burdensomeness of grief, and for making the daily sorrow tolerable.

The ameliorative of Sleep.—What a wonderful minister is the genius of sleep! When our bodies are tired out, and the nervous force is almost spent, and we feel ourselves wearied and 'down,' what a hotbed is provided for irritableness, and doubt, and despondency, and despair! A tired-out body offers a fertile rootage to all manner of mental ailments. Many a man in the evening time feels that life is very colourless, and this sense of the sombreness and dullness arises from a body which has temporarily lost its spring. And then comes sleep during which our gracious God comes and refills the exhausted lamp, and in the morning we see things in clearer perspective, and we face the new day as men renewed.

Then how frequently sleep acts as a merciful opiate when we are inclined to make precipitate vows! Something has happened and we hastily

[1] Longfellow.

resolve upon hasty action. But some discreet friend says to us, 'Sleep on it.' And the influence of the one night's sleep scatters our rash resolve like morning mist.

And what a wonderful servant is the same sleep in the times of grief and loneliness and bereavement! We seek sleep not only to forget our troubles, but with the assurance that we shall find healing, and strength to endure through the ministry of its sweet silences. For we are all sometimes conscious that something more than mere rest and relief has been imparted in sleep. It is not merely that, according to the old translation, 'He giveth His beloved sleep'; but, according to the better reading, 'He giveth to His beloved in sleep.' We grow aware as life wears on that sleep does something more for the soul than merely make a break in its conscious life.

2. *The ameliorative of Time.*—What a healing minister we have in time itself.

Dumb Comforter of woes!
The depths of whose deep comfort no one knows;
Whose consolations on the spirit steal
More gently than Love's gentlest word; and heal
Where Love falls back affrighted; only life
Proves Thee the Comforter of mortal strife,
Of all that doth begin and end—that He
May speak in thy dread silence endlessly![1]

The old proverb tells us that time brings roses. And a still older proverb, coming down from the days of the Romans, tells us that time is generally the best doctor. The new railway cutting is a great red gash in the green countryside, but time is a great healer and restorer, and day after day the bald, bare place is being re-covered with fern and grass and wild flower, until at length the ugly cutting harmonizes with the colours of the surrounding landscape, and the gash is healed. And time works a similar history with human life. A cutting injury is done to me, and I think I can never forget it. But time takes the thing in hand, and little by little, and day by day, the healing process is continued, until at length the open wound is closed, and I wonder how I could have been so silly as to make such a stir about it. And we all know what time can do even for the sharp pangs of a great bereavement. In the first dark and cloudy day it seems as though no light will ever fall upon our path again. 'I shall never laugh any more.' Oh, yes you will! Time will begin to minister to the broken spirit, and, however incredible it may now appear, some day the smiles will come back. And this because, as the days go by, time turns a beautiful memory into an alluring hope. We not only feel the season behind us, but the pulling power of the age that lies before. Let us never forget when we are counting our blessings to thank God for the ministry of time.

3. *The ameliorative of Work.*—May we not speak of work as one of the Lord's servants appointed by Him to subdue the distresses of life, and to mitigate its pangs? How frequently it happens that the needful work that is required to be done immediately after a death is a gracious helpmeet to the spirit. We say one of another, 'It's well she had so much to do.' Goethe's mother said of her son, 'My son, when he has a grief, puts it in a poem and so gets rid of it.' We cannot all put our griefs into poems, but it is amazing how much of them we can put into work. And so it is well for us to look upon work as a signal token of Divine Providence and Fatherly love and grace. He has appointed us to work, and the work has been ordained for our eternal good. 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake'; yes, but the cursing of the ground was for the blessedness of man. In cursing the ground God blessed the race. When God cursed the ground He made it essential that man should work. The curse was only a restraining of the natural energies of the earth, in order that man should co-operate and bring the hidden things to fruition. God made work compulsory in order that man might regain his lost Eden.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find how great was Paul's fear of indolent Christians. The early believers gave up their ordinary work and passively waited the coming of their Lord. Now Paul knew that, in the time of stress, and persecution, and tribulation, to have no work would be to take sides with the enemy. Therefore 'let every man abide in the calling wherein he was called.' Let every man go on working, for he will find in his work an ameliorative for his sorrows. To cast aside work is to deprive oneself of the means of grace.

[1] Mary E. Coleridge, *Unpublished Poems.*

4. *The ameliorative of Service.*—We distinguish between work and service. Work is primarily for our own profit; service is primarily profit for others. In this kind of service there is a grand ameliorative for the griefs and distresses of life. It is an amazing thing to watch the new colour which our sorrow assumes when we go out to minister to others. The rawness goes out of our own wound while we are dressing the wounds of our neighbour. Our own pang is lessened when we seek to take the pang out of another's soul. 'I felt as though my heart would break, so I just got up and went out to help a poor body who I knew was in need.' Yes, and while she went to bring comfort to her needy sister the heart's-ease came into her own soul. This is the gracious way of God. We can go out with a broken heart to minister to other broken hearts, and a cooling balm is applied to our own feverish pain and fears. Along these lines we can all make bold and immediate experiment, and you may depend upon it you will find that in this kind of service there is hidden an opiate which deadens the sense of our own sorrows and makes it possible for us to endure them.

¶ You remember that lovely French Countess of La Garaye, who rode forth one morning with her gay company to lead the hunt, and was brought back an hour later thrown from her horse and crippled for life; and then how, after much repining at her lot, she joins with her husband in transforming their castle into a home for incurables like herself, until at last a new and solemn happiness blesses their home, and their lives become, as the poem says:

> A tale of noble souls who conquered grief
> By dint of tending suffering not their own.[1]

All these Divine amelioratives are wonderful ministers of God, and we ought to remember them when we seek to tell the story of His mercy and grace. Let us think of them as the angels of the Lord, appointed by Him to do us service in the dark and cloudy day.

[1] F. G. Peabody, *Afternoons in the College Chapel*, 45.

The Energy of Prayer

Luke xxii. 46.—'Rise and pray.'

1. *Prayer makes us more deeply conscious of God.*—In the rush and stress of life, and never more than in these days when the song of speed is on every man's tongue, we tend to lose a sure and clear consciousness of God. If men will not sometimes think of God, He will become merely a name to them. It is in prayer that we have the sure consciousness of God. Even although a man may kneel with a haze over his mind and a chill upon his spirit, he will not kneel in vain. Sailors have called out in the mist and fog as their vessel has approached some hidden shore. They did not know how far off the cliffs were which were marked upon their chart. Still they called, and as the responding 'hail' came back, they knew that eyes were watching and hearts were beating for them. In the same way men become sure of God when they pray to Him.

2. *Prayer brings us into sympathy with the mind of God.*—It is a sad commonplace that there are evils unnoticed, wrongs unremedied, poor unpitied and unhelped, miserable, uncomforted, not because men do not know, but because they do not sympathize. Their eyes look out daily on scenes of poverty and of pain. Their ears are filled with the cries of those who suffer. But they do not seem to see or to hear because their hearts have not been touched to sympathy.

¶ Readers of Alfred Russel Wallace's *Travels on the Amazon* will remember that, the farther the intrepid voyager proceeded up the great waterway, the finer became the physique of the natives. And at last, when Dr Wallace reached a point to which no white man had ever before penetrated, he discovered men and women any of whom might have posed as models for Grecian sculptors. The reason is obvious. The savage knows nothing of 'the law of Christ.' He will bear no other's burdens. The sick must die; the wounded must perish; the feeble must go to the wall.[1]

All the great leaders in the philanthropies and redemptions have been men of prayer. As they have continued in prayer they have come

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Luggage of Life*, 7.

to learn the mind of Christ. They have begun to think His thoughts. They have become one with Him in spirit. He has lived and breathed within them. As the tide of sympathy with the mind of God has risen in their soul while they prayed, they were endued with the power of God.

3. *Prayer surrenders us to the energy of God.*—In surrender we open our whole being to God as a flower opens itself to the sun, and we are filled, up to our measure, with His Divine energy.

There is a strange deep saying of the Old Testament, in which a psalmist charges the Hebrew people with limiting the Holy One of Israel. We limit God when we think meanly of Him and teach men an impoverished doctrine of His grace. We limit God when we will not keep His commandments and do His will. We limit God by every act of rebellion which blocks His way. But there is one way in which we limit God most effectually of all. That way is by our prayerlessness. Because we are not surrendered to God in prayer, the might of His energy does not pass into us. Every faculty a man has, every talent God has given him, every fibre of his heart, and every cell in his brain, may be energized by the energy of God. 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.' Men whom others have despised, teachers whom the strong have scorned, humble and lowly and unlearned men and women have done great things for God, because they have been so surrendered to Him that His energy has been a swift dynamic in every faculty of body and of soul.

¶ It is a wonderful historical fact that the men of prayer have always been the men of power in the world. I want to convince you about this. Some of you men, if you are arguing with some friend in the workshop, be sure and ask him why it is that the men of prayer in the world have been the men of power. Take only one instance. Where did they always go to find men for the forlorn hope in Havelock's days? They went to Havelock's prayer meeting; that is where they found men who had the courage to come out for the forlorn hope.[1]

4. *Prayer works on the will of God.*—No error has done more to paralyse our faith in prayer and to make the prayer of faith a wistful observance than the strange conception that God is fixed and inexorable law. But God is not law. God is will. The will of God gives us the due and necessary limit of prayer.

¶ But is not the promise in Mark xi. 24 an unqualified one? Yes, but within the limits that are well understood to exist between the two contracting parties. Here is a man with a well-defined plan for a house. He turns the work over to the contractor, with a promise to supply whatever he might want. Very soon there comes a request for an extra supply of material to erect a few towers which in the opinion of the contractor would very much beautify the building. Here is a father who has a plan for his boy's future. He sends him to college, saying, 'Send to me for whatever you want and you shall receive it.' In a few months the boy sends home for an extra supply of cash for certain side-issues of questionable propriety. Each of these requests is properly denied. And yet each of the petitioners might say that the promise was unqualified.[1]

The orderliness of Nature does not prevent us, with our will-power of free spirit, from initiating movement which, by means of the strict working of the laws, will produce results that we desire. If a bowler sends down a straight ball it will hit the wicket, according to the laws of Nature. But the batsman, by the free action of his will, can initiate a new movement, a new chain of (what we call) cause and effect. By the laws of Nature the ball will hit the wicket, and yet, by the laws of Nature, it will be prevented from hitting the wicket through the free, creative action of will. Each one of us, a thousand times a day, causes something to happen which Nature would not have brought about if we had not determined it. And if we can do it, it is quite certain that God can do it a great deal better. If we have prayed for some physical result—supposing it has been real and true prayer—we have not simply dictated to Him our desires; we have united ourselves to Him to want what He wants. And it is perfectly clear that we shall not persuade Him to do something that He doesn't want. So the only question is whether the result that we should like is what He wants. What He wants is always spiritual, to draw men to Himself in love; anything else in heaven

[1] A. F. W. Ingram, *The Call of the Father*, 75.

[1] W. E. Biederwolf, *How can God Answer Prayer?* 183.

or earth or under the earth is of value only as a means to that end. If, in any physical matter for which we have prayed, He knows that the manipulation of the laws of Nature will help towards that spiritual purpose, then it is something that His love is longing to do; and our prayer, our voluntary union with Him, has placed our will in conjunction with His on the matter, and His power is set free to work. His omniscience knows, and our ignorance does not know, whether a given physical event will help to work out His spiritual purposes or not. So 'Thy will be done' must, of course, be the condition attaching to any prayer. That is the same as wanting what He wants; and nothing else is true prayer.

The conception that lies behind much of the seemingly wise writing of many clever men is that God has no other laws than those we know, and no higher methods than those we use. But God is a sovereign will with infinite resources. God's will as an eternal purpose in Christ cannot be finally thwarted.

And yet God's will, as Jesus tells us in the prayer He taught us to pray, is not always done. A man can resist His Holy Ghost. As a man can thwart and check the will of God, so also can he move that will and work on it to his blessing and his help. As he brings his desires and his will to bear on the will of God, he moves God, and alters His method and His ways. The issue is often seen in what men call miracles. But there are no miracles with God.

Touch

Luke xxii. 51.—'And he touched his ear.'

We cannot recall to mind too often that it was the victory in the Garden that accounted for this triumph outside the gate. The irresistible dignity and strength here displayed by our Lord were gained by watching and prayer.

This, however, is made still more impressively clear by the fate of those who did not watch and pray. On them everything came as a blinding and bewildering surprise. They were aroused out of profound slumber, and came stumbling forward hardly yet awake. When hands were laid on Jesus, one of the disciples cried, 'Shall we smite with the sword?' And, without waiting for an answer, he struck. But what a ridiculous blow! How like a man half-awake! Instead of the head, he only smote the ear. This blow would have been dearly paid for had not Jesus, with perfect presence of mind, interposed between Peter and the swords which were being drawn to cut him down. 'Suffer ye thus far,' He said, keeping the soldiers back; and, touching the ear, He healed it, and saved His poor disciple.

'Touch is the sense which love employs.' It means the annihilation of distance between one who loves and that which he loves, so that mere nearness is replaced by contact. Our sense of the significance of touch finds expression in such phrases as 'getting into touch,' or 'living in touch' with people. They stand for sympathetic contact, the sympathy which seeks contact, and does not keep others 'at arm's length.' Children learn it in their mothers' laps, and are never content to be merely near those they love without actually touching them.

1. In the simplest and most literal way Jesus ministered by His touch to human needs. Besides the case in our text we have many others. When Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a great fever, 'he came and took her by the hand, and raised her up; and the fever left her.'

He touched her hand and the fever left her;
  He touched her hand as He only can;
With the wondrous skill of the great Physician,
  With the tender touch of the Son of Man;
And the fever pain in the throbbing temples
  Died out, with the flush on brow and cheek,
And the lips that had been so parched and
      burning
  Trembled with thanks she could not speak;
And the eyes, when the fever light had faded,
  Looked up, by her grateful tears made dim;
And she rose and ministered in her household,
  She rose and ministered unto Him.

As He left the house of Jairus, two blind men besought Him to heal them. 'Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it done unto you. And their eyes were opened' (Matt. ix. 29). When they brought Him a deaf and dumb man in the coasts of Decapolis, 'He took him aside from the multitude privately, and put his fingers into his ears . . . and touched his tongue.' In none of all the cases where He is recorded to have

touched people was it necessary, so far as man can judge, for Him to have done so. He did fully as much in other cases, where He did not use His hands in this way, and in some cases He healed those who were at a distance (Matt. viii. 13). It seems to have been as the expression of His sympathy with the sufferers that He touched them, just as we lay our hands on the shoulders of our friends when we want to speak to them out of our hearts.

Especially noteworthy are two cases in which He incurred ceremonial defilement by this use of His hands. One is that of the son of the widow of Nain: 'He came nigh and touched the bier' (Luke vii. 14), although He thus insured legal defilement (Num. xix. 11), for having to do with a dead body. More striking is His healing of the leper, as He came down from the mountain of the great sermon: 'He stretched forth his hand, and touched him' (Matt. viii. 3), although the law of Moses shut the leper out from all contact with other men (Lev. xiii. 45), and to break this law was to incur uncleanness.

¶ Why did He touch him, even before He healed him? Because He saw that the first need of that poor soul, shut off for years from his kind, was sympathy—that, even before healing. He must have been a loathsome sight, and probably more so to our Lord's senses than to those of other men. But He put forth His hand and touched him, as the expression of His pity and sympathy. And was not that what He did in the Incarnation itself, drawing near to us in our utter defilement, taking hold of us, as He did of that poor leper, putting forth that gracious and mighty hand to touch us? [1]

2. Jesus 'lived in touch' with those He came to save. He got as near to them as possible, although this shocked many who cherished the spirit of separation, from which the Pharisees took their sectarian name. They murmured, saying, 'This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.' They said in Jericho, 'He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner.' They thought He was breaking down the distinction between good and bad among men, by failing to keep the bad 'at arm's length,' as they did.

¶ What Chesterton says of Browning can be said of our Saviour in an altogether incom-

[1] A. Maclaren.

parable way: 'He was the friend of outcasts whom even outcasts cast out.'

Nor is it clear that we have the right to cast stones at them, for what would we have felt when we saw Him accepting invitations from men whose occupations we thought disgraceful and immoral, and sitting at meat with men and women whose characters were unquestionably bad?

3. As love evokes love in return, so our Lord's touch encouraged others to touch Him. In Galilee, 'Wheresoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the market-places and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.'

Apart from demands upon His power to heal, His friends show their affection by touching Him. The woman which was a sinner breaks through the bonds of pharisaic propriety and follows Him into the house of Simon, the Pharisee, 'and standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet' (Luke vii. 38). Dr Melanchthon W. Stryker suggests that there is as much of affection as of doubt in the demand of the Apostle Thomas, 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe' (John xx. 25). He thinks this was an expression of his sincere love for the Master, which asked for the touch that is more intimate than sight. May we not say that the substance of the speech shows doubt, but the form of it affection? 'That disciple whom Jesus loved' especially is the Evangelist who records for us the saying of Thomas, and it recalls his own language in the opening words of his great Epistle: 'That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life.'

4. The gospel calls upon us to 'live in touch' with the God whom Jesus reveals as His Father and ours. We are not called to submission to a distant and unlovable deity, like the Allah of the Muslim; nor to a chilly adoration of a philosophic absolute, who can be described only

in negative terms; nor to the worship of an infinite Rabbi, such as the later Jewish theology presents. We are brought to a living communion with a gracious Friend and Father, whose love to us is reflected in the affection of all who have been dearest and kindest to us among men. He is nearer to us than these could be, nearer than our very selves. As F. W. Faber says, 'God never is so far off as only to be near.' No language that does not break the bounds of our finite personality is too strong to express our closeness to Him 'in whom we live, and move, and have our being.'

The Old Testament presents God and man in contrast and antithesis, as many Christians still speak of them, though not in Christian fashion. Such language was necessary in the lower classes of God's great school, because any other would have led men to error and idolatry. It is not without its uses still, when the thought of the nearness of God obscures His awfulness to us. But God, after speaking 'to the fathers in the prophets in many parts and in many manners, hath in the end of the days spoken unto us in his son' (Heb. i. 1, 2) fully and clearly; and that not so much by what the Son said, as by what the Son is. In Him our human nature is exhibited in its true character, that which was in the thought of God when He said, 'Let us make man in our own image.' Our humanity stands up in Jesus Christ, a thing pure, spotless, and splendid; and it is in Him that we are to see and estimate it, and to be changed to that image by the vision and the fellowship.

5. Working 'in touch' is the method of the Kingdom of God. Men have tried to do His work while standing afar from those they sought to benefit; but to little result. The greatest who have followed in His footsteps, have followed Him in this as in other things. The Moravians who offered to become slaves, that they might be allowed to reach the negro slaves in the West Indies, and who made their abode among the lepers, knowing what that must end in, that they might reach that class, were illustrations of His method, and of His unresting pity for lost men.

Social reformers are discovering that they can do little good for people of any sort while they hold them at arm's length.

¶ 'I have learned,' says a worker in one of the University settlements, 'that you can get access to the people who need you only by living with them. They will not come to you; but Jew and Gentile will make you welcome if you come to them. Our meetings for their benefit are a failure. Our personal intercourse with them, man to man, has been promising great good. It is of no use to come once or twice to see them; you must live with them, if you are to do anything for them.'

So Thomas Chalmers gave up his wealthy parish in Glasgow, and took charge of one in the 'wynds,' that he might get near to the poor. So Caroline Hill took charge of the wretched court in East London, which rarely had missed mention for a day in the police reports, and by living among its people was able to change it into a place of sobriety, thrift, and honesty.[1]

Memory and Morning

Luke xxii. 54.—'And Peter followed afar off.'
Mark xiv. 68.—'He went out into the porch; and the cock crew.'

When Christ was arrested by the soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane, all His disciples, we are told, forsook Him and fled. Two of them, however, Peter and John, turned in their flight, and following timidly in the rear of the captors of Christ, came up with them just as with their prisoner they were entering into the High Priest's house. One of the two, the Apostle John, seems to have had some kind of acquaintance with the High Priest, and on that account easily entered with the rest into the High Priest's house. But Peter, forsaken for once by his native boldness, remained standing without. John, finding himself separated from his friend, went back to the street again, and looked for him, and through the influence with the man who kept the gate which his acquaintance with the High Priest would give him, easily obtained admission for his brother Apostle inside the courtyard. Once inside, he seems to have been left to look out for himself, and John apparently hurried back to his Master's side. And now Peter's trials began.

The courtyard was a veritable den of lions. Nervous, fidgety, and with a plain countryman's

[1] R. E. Thompson, *Nature, the Mirror of Grace*, 69.

feeling of strangeness in the big city house, he found his way to the centre of the court, where, round the fire which had been lighted—for it was very early and the morning air was chilly—there sat the soldiers who had captured Christ and the servants of the household, laughing, jesting, and warming themselves. Meanwhile the girl who kept the gate appears to have been watching Peter. Perhaps, as Dr Stalker suggests, with a woman's shrewdness she had half divined his secret while he was standing a little way off. She walked across the court to the noisy little group beside the fire, and fixing her eyes full on Peter who sat there, his bronzed fisherman's face picked out in the firelight, said to him, 'And thou also wast with the Nazareth Jesus.' Peter was utterly taken aback. This was altogether unexpected, and surprised and fearful, he stammered forth in the presence of them all, 'I neither know nor understand what thou sayest.' It was a lie. For the moment the incident appears to have passed without notice, and Peter, with a nameless dread at his heart, left the fire and found his way back again to the gate, hoping perhaps to make good his escape to the street.

In the words of Mark 'he went out into the porch and the cock crew.' It was the first denial. We find two thoughts suggested here.

1. *The Discipleship of Distance.*—The peril of the porch may overtake a man at any stage of his experience. Come it early or come it late, it means that he is edging away from Christ and responsibility and witness-bearing. It means that the spirit of the world has grown desperately strong. It is a dangerous hour, for if it means nothing more, it means at least a weakening of those winsome chivalries of boyhood that would have died for a dream's sake.

Well, there is this to be said to the man in the porch. Others have been there before you, ready to step out into the night, and they have heard the cock crow. John Bunyan has a very frank passage in his *Grace Abounding* for which many men in the porch have blessed him. He tells how he was beset by all manner of the crudest forms of doubt and unbelief. 'These blasphemous thoughts were such as stirred up questions in me against the very being of God, and of His only-beloved Son: as whether there were, in truth, a God or Christ? And whether the holy scriptures were not rather a fable, and cunning story, than the holy and pure word of God?' Then he goes on to enumerate and detail other forms of doubt which assailed him, and how he endeavoured to 'set some of the sentences of blessed Paul against them,' but all in vain.

Now what did he do? He turned the telescope of a little clear and fearless thinking on that bewitching Lorelei. 'Only, by the distaste that they gave unto my spirit, *I felt that there was something in me that refused to embrace them.*' The bird of dawning is already singing a man's salvation when, however fierce the temptations by which he is assailed, he admits that there is a saving something in him that refuses to embrace them. We are not alone in our doubts and our fierce temptations. The dawn has broken for many a man just in realizing that simple fact. But whatever a man does, he must not linger in the porch. He must not nurse his doubts or pander to his passions. He must open the window and get out into life. A wound is a dangerous, maybe a loathsome, thing, but a scar is an honourable badge. This is what the great writers of all ages have done for us. They have not hidden their scars. But they have outlasted the fight, and, however brief-lived they be, have lived long enough to bequeath to us who follow their heritage of courage, wisdom, humility, and rich toleration. There comes a moment to most of us when life, or our enterprise, or even the Christ of God Himself, seems to have failed tragically and completely. There comes the impulse to turn our back on the past. The desire uppermost is to get away from it all, out into the friendly and concealing night.

2. *The Succour of Homely Things.*—Our Lord knew very well what He was doing when He linked a saving memory for his erratic disciple with the familiar farmyard noise. There is many a lad in our great cities, fresh from a Highland home and the prayers of his mother, who, standing in imminent and awful temptation, could be saved were he to hear once again on the heavy night air the calls of the old farmyard or the lowing of homeward driven cattle—in such mysterious ways does God move to the succour of His children. It was all that, and more, that Peter heard that night when he went out to the gate from the heat of the High Priest's

fire. The bird of dawning woke within him long, long thoughts of the Highland home in Galilee. Once again he heard water lapping against a boat on a northern lakeside. Once more he heard a voice that called, and called again, like some zephyr cooling the heat of his passion and his pride. Peter remembered. And the torrent of oaths stopped, and saving tears flowed in their stead.

¶ I remember the morning I landed at Jaffa to begin a camping expedition through the Holy Land, being met by a well-known London preacher, who held up his hand, and said, 'Oh, go away back; you will be so disappointed!' Such was not my verdict, although I understood afterwards what my friend had meant. In a land which was at that time oppressed by the Turk, where most of the sacred sites were matters of discussion and many of them scenes of dispute, there was much that was calculated to disappoint one who wished to travel quietly in the sacred footsteps. But the great, broad outlines are still there. You get the atmosphere of the East, so essential to an understanding of much of the Bible. But it was a very little thing which first stirred me mightily in the sacred city, partly because it was unexpected. I was meditating quietly in my room after a first look round Jerusalem, when suddenly the silence was pierced by the shrill crowing of a cock, and, like Peter, I found the floodgates of memory opened. There are not many cities in the heart of which you may suddenly hear the crowing of a cock—I do not remember to have heard it in any other city in the world, and to hear that unexpected sound in such surroundings is an experience not readily forgotten.[1]

(1) 'He went out into the porch; and the cock crew.' The man was running away from his post, turning his back not only on Christ, but also on his own manhood, when the shrill clarion rang out like a Roman bugle-call. Against the people of the porch—the sitters on fences—the bird of dawn cries aloud their shame. That is the conviction which in one form and another has gripped the mind of men of any insight and imagination. 'A wee bird cam' to oor ha' door.' Wee birds have a way of coming when men are tempted to desert an ancient loyalty under the fear that it is going to prove a lost cause. Does salvation depend on things like that? Yes, on strangely little things, that do not seem so small when we look back on them. A letter, a missed train, a chance call, a book picked up in an idle moment, an accepted invitation of a friend to accompany him to evening service in the house of God—things like these have been the cock-crows heralding the dawn of a new day.

(2) 'He went out into the porch; and the cock crew.' The strange sound of salvation came just at the moment when he needed it most. Life had failed; he himself certainly had failed; even Christ seemed to have failed. There he goes, turning away from the conflict of emotion, from the toils of passion, rage, disappointment, and the sting of memory—into the porch, the threshold of another kind of life and possibly a suicide like Judas's. And then the bird of dawning spoke, heralding the breaking of a new day—a new day for Peter, an endless day for the world.

The Christian imagination has never done justice to that cock-crow, just as none of us ever does justice to the great moments of life and experience. Shakespeare gives some hint of the power of it:

> It was about to speak when the cock crew.
> And then it started like a guilty thing
> Upon a fearful summons. I have heard
> The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
> Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
> Awake the god of day; and at his warning,
> Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
> The extravagant and erring spirit hies
> To his confine.

You will deny, said Jesus to His too-confident disciple. But He promised him that he would hear the bird of dawning crow. And when a man hears that, he cannot linger at the gate. You remember how in *Hamlet* the Ghost, which to Marcellus and Horatio is but a vision of nameless and unmeaning terror, fades on the crowing of the cock.

> Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
> Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
> The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
> And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad;
> The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
> So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.
> So have I heard and do in part believe it.

[1] Hubert L. Simpson.

They believe it altogether who have found their ghostly misgivings vanish with the voices that call them back to faith and hope and service. 'And the cock crew. And Peter remembered.' God's bird awakening memory was also ushering in the dawn of the day of the world's redemption. And sometimes still, when the porch has been cold and the night dark, and the temptation strong to deny all knowledge of the soul's sublimest moments, a casual voice avails to waken memory. A man remembers some saving word of Jesus; and, lo! 'tis redemption and the dawn. 'Watch, therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing.'

Peter's Denial

Luke xxii. 55-60.—'Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.'

What does this story teach us? Well, the lessons, whatever they may be, will never be got at if we are merely content to sit as Peter's judges and to pass sentence upon him. Making a target of another man's blunders is always very easy and always very useless. For the matter of that, how many of us are fit to sit as judges of Peter? We call him a coward; the word slips easily from the tip of the tongue—from the lips of many of us who have never been tested like Peter. Remember he followed Jesus. We call ourselves Christians; how many of us have been tested as Peter was tested? When on that memorable night the soldiers carried Jesus away to the High Priest's house, where should we have been—with the nine who are only heard of again when all danger is past, or with those two, Peter and John? It is easy to say 'I am a Christian' when the profession puts money in a man's pocket and covers him with social respectability. It is another thing when the test means the sorrowful vale, and the crown of thorns and the cross. Peter's rashness, Peter's cowardice! Let him that never was rash accuse Peter of rashness, let him that never was guilty of a cowardly act accuse Peter of cowardice, and let him that never denied his Lord cast the first stone at Peter. There will be little stone-throwing then. For, spite of all his cursing and swearing he is very human, very like one of ourselves. Let us stand by his side and ask him to tell us over again the sorrowful tale of this great turning-point in his life; ask him to tell us of that love which looked upon him, which brought him up from the depths even to the heights again. And when a man reads of that first denial let him say, 'My soul, take heed to thyself.' And when he reads of that second denial, 'My soul, be not high-minded, but humble.' And when he reads of that third denial, even with its oaths and curses, once more, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' If we are not ready to come to this story with that spirit do not let us come at all. But if we will come humble and contrite, why, then the story has many things to say to us about the danger of temptation as it comes to us in a very different form from that which we expect.

1. Peter was *weakest just in what seemed to be his strongest virtue.* He, the dauntless leader, the intrepid spokesman of the Twelve, fell from want of courage. Moses, the meekest of all men upon the earth, whom hardly even God's own command could encourage to put himself forward as the leader of God's people, burst out into the arrogant exclamation, 'Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?' David, the tenderest of all hearts, is betrayed into committing murder. Solomon, the wisest of all intellects, stoops to the folly of idolatry.

2. Peter fell by *a commonplace temptation*, very different from the imaginative reality. 'And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.' And Peter said unto him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both to prison and to death.' He knew that some great test was in store for him, and when he said 'I am ready to go with thee, both to prison and to death,' he was in earnest.

He may have had in his mind's eye a lofty hall, a majestic tribunal, a silent audience, as he stood alone with his Lord. He may have seemed to himself to hear the measured accents of the judge: 'Simon of Capernaum, choose to leave this court free, as a Jew, or else to go to prison with Jesus of Nazareth,' and he may have anticipated that amid the secret admiration of his foes, and the enthusiasm of the followers of Christ, he should reply: 'My choice is made; though all should deny thee yet will not I deny thee.'

Or he may have anticipated what really did occur in a different way, and he should be given the choice by the Roman Governor of deserting Christ, or else the alternative of death, even if it were the death of a slave, the malefactor's cross. He may have looked forward to suffering scorn and pain and humiliation, hard to be borne, and even beside his Lord at the last supreme moment laying down his life beside his Master, uttering with his parting breath the words: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.'

But how different, how paltry, how tame, how commonplace was the reality when it came. Peter expected the temptation to deny Jesus would be something more tremendous and calling for far more heroic courage than the questionings of a few idle slaves. It is a common error. We nerve ourselves in fancy for a great struggle, but suffer ourselves to be conquered day by day in little things.

It was in the ordinary gossip of society that Peter denied his Master. There is a table and the guests are seated, and some one makes a miserable jest about religion and Christ, and the holy life. You call yourself a Christian, but at that dinner-table did you sit pained and silent? Nay, you joined in the jest, you shared that laugh that cut Him to the heart, and for one moment He lives again in that sad story of Peter's denial, He hears His own disciple say, 'I know not the man.'

¶ There was a dining-room in West London about a century ago, and a party of guests seated at table. And again the low miserable talk that touches upon sacred things. And there was a man there who could not bear to hear his Lord insulted and reviled. He rose, had his carriage ordered, and said his farewells with all courtesy and good breeding. 'I am sorry to have to leave, but I am still a Christian.' And that man lived to be Prime Minister in England, Sir Robert Peel.

3. The sin of Peter is the most marked instance that we have in the Bible of a trying class of sins, *sins of surprise*. Habitual sins always settle down into definite tracks which we can avoid if we choose. They always give us the opportunity to provide against them by proper precautions. We can avoid the temptations which we know will bring them. We can anticipate almost the precise moment when the temptation will come. We know pretty accurately the shape which the temptation will take. For such sins we are fully responsible, and we know it. But the true sins of surprise seem more than any others to realize St Paul's words, 'It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.' Why are these permitted to torment us?

Such temptations are expressly and plainly intended to test the soundness of our armour. We are apparently free from some fault: either we were free born, or we have set ourselves free in the spiritual battle. But is our freedom complete: are we really free? What is it that we care for, the thing or the appearance? There is no test like a sudden and quite unexpected trial. This probes a man to the very quick. It puts him out of all the shifts by which he may have hitherto either rightly avoided the trial, or wrongly covered his yielding to it. It forces him to grapple with the enemy. But the trial does not end because the man is defeated. A second trial then begins, quite as hard or harder. He has fancied himself free. A sudden temptation has proved to himself and to others that he is not so free as he thought and seemed. And now what will he do with the discovery? He has been surprised into violence of temper, into injustice, into indulgence of the body, into a lie. What will he do. Has he still left behind the Christian humility, and the Christian manliness, which accept the shame and strive to be more careful for the future? His weakness is exposed. He can no longer challenge the respect of his fellow-men in the same way that he might have done before. Sins of surprise are particularly those which St Paul commends to the care of Christian friends: 'If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.'

In the midst of the cursing and swearing of Peter, the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and with that look, silenced and shamed and stayed His disciple. It has been step by step, down, down, until this moment, but now the turn is come. And when Peter went out and wept bitterly, his restoration had already begun.

O Jesu, gone so far apart
Only my heart can follow Thee,
That look which pierced St Peter's heart
Turn now on me.

Thou who dost search me thro' and thro'
And mark the crooked ways I went,
Look on me, Lord, and make me too
Thy penitent.[1]

We do not hear of Peter again until Christ had come back from the Cross. But we can picture how they would tell him, hour by hour, of all that was happening on that sad, sad day: of the trial, of the mocking, of the cruel scourges. But Peter dare not venture forth again. Then they would tell him how at last, in the darkness, the end would have come, how the Lord was laid in the tomb. And then he would have endured such agony as if the spear had been thrust in his own side.

We know the rest: when our Lord came back from the tomb, how the repentant disciple was made once more a chief shepherd of the flock of Jesus Christ. 'Go,' he said—'Go and tell Peter.' If only another disciple had not, by his own deed, made it impossible, would not the Master have said, 'And tell Judas'? There is no limit to His love but that which we put ourselves.

The Face of Jesus

Luke xxii. 61.—'And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.'

It is very remarkable that, though they have told us so many things of Jesus, there is one which the Evangelists have hidden from us, and that a thing of peculiar interest. They have told us of His goings to and fro in the days of His flesh, of the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth, and the wonderful works which were wrought by His blessed hands; but they have nowhere shown nor so much as hinted what manner of person He was in outward aspect. And it would seem that this surprising reticence had been observed also by the men who had companied with Him, for there was no apostolic tradition to which appeal might be made, but only prophetic pictures of the coming Messiah. Some quoted the twenty-second Psalm and the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and inferred that He had 'no form nor comeliness, no beauty that we should desire him.' Others appealed to the forty-fifth Psalm, and alleged that Jesus had been 'fairer than the children of men.' Devout curiosity could not rest satisfied with this uncertainty, and, lacking traditions, it fabricated legends.

¶ In the Cathedral of San Martino at Lucca there is preserved and still venerated a relic of mediæval devotion—a Byzantine crucifix of cedar wood. It is called the Volto Santo or Holy Face, and the legend is that Nicodemus, being charged by an angel to fashion from memory a likeness of the Saviour, took an axe and hewed down a cedar. His task was a difficult one and he fell asleep over it, and on waking he found to his astonishment that the work had been done while he slept. Where the shapeless wood had been he beheld the Holy Face.[1]

But there is not a shred of trustworthy tradition regarding the human aspect of our Lord, and such legends serve only to render the silence of the sacred writers more remarkable. And what is the explanation of it?

1. It was the manner of the Master. He said much about Himself. He set Himself forth as the object of faith, as the example of life, as the incarnate manifestation of the unseen Father. And He spoke of His poverty. 'The foxes have holes,' He said, 'and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' Yet He never said anything, nor ever so much as dropped a casual hint about His physical condition or His personal aspect, presenting herein a striking contrast to others whose names live in history. St Paul had his infirmities, and he spoke of them. He quotes with undisguised resentment the sneer of his Corinthian critics that 'his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible,' and tells what anguish his 'thorn in the flesh' had cost

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

[1] D. Smith, *The Face of Jesus*, 15.

him, and how hardly he had been reconciled to it.

Milton was blind, and he bemoaned his privation:

'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best.'

These men had their infirmities much in their thoughts, and they could not refrain from speaking of them.

It was otherwise with Jesus. He never once alluded to His physical condition. Was it that He had no infirmities? That can hardly be. When the Lord of Glory took our nature, He took it in its weakness that He might be 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities' and prove our Comrade on the road. The fancy that He must have been physically faultless is partly Jewish, partly Greek. It was required by the Jewish law that the ministers of religion should have no mar or defect. 'No man,' it is written, 'of the seed of Aaron the priest that hath a blemish, shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God.' And the Greek ideal of perfection was not moral but physical. The Christian ideal is contrary both to the Jewish and to the Greek. It places perfection not in the body but in the soul, and recognizes physical infirmity as a spiritual discipline. Perfection is attained through suffering. In St John's portraiture of the Master, whom he remembered so well, there are touches which seem to indicate that He was not without infirmity. Consider what befell in the course of His journey through Samaria at the outset of His ministry. After two days' travel He reached Jacob's Well. The strength of His companions was unabated, but His was spent; and He sank down exhausted on the parapet, while they repaired to the neighbouring town of Sychar, nearly a mile away, to purchase provisions. His frame was not so robust as theirs, and it appears that by and by it was broken by the strain of His toils and wanderings. 'Thou art not yet fifty years old,' said the rulers in Jerusalem toward the close of His ministry, 'and hast thou seen Abraham?' This is a pathetic disclosure. He was only two and thirty, yet He looked nigh fifty. The Cross was His goal, and its grim shadow was on His face as He journeyed toward the darkening West.

Jesus had nothing of carnal beauty, yet there could be no uncomeliness in Him. The beauty of His spirit would transfigure His flesh. It is told of an ancient sculptor's statue of the goddess of Love that, if a riband was drawn over its eyes, the face had no charm, but when the riband was removed, it was lit with beauty like a landscape when the morning breaks. And how beautiful the Face of Jesus must have been in the light of that surpassing Love which shone through the windows of His soul!

¶ One thing we may be sure of; that great soul could not fail to impress itself, its nobleness, its purity, on the fleshy envelope. The Transfiguration story is the story of a life, as well as of a moment. That face—the face which, as Browning has it, 'far from vanish, grows . . . becomes our universe that feels and knows'; the face in which, as men looked on it, they found their rest-giver, their burden-bearer, whose smile drew them from the tax-gatherer's custom-house, from the fisherman's boat—carried its own revelation. The peace, the power, the loveliness within, mirrored themselves there.[1]

2. It is a further and sufficient explanation of the silence of the sacred writers regarding the physical aspect of Jesus that they are wont to think of Him not as the Man of Sorrows but as the Glorified Lord. 'Henceforth,' says St Paul, 'know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him so no more.'

It is thus that they always think and would have us think of Jesus, standing here in marked contrast to the mediæval artists and sculptors whose works adorn the cathedrals and galleries of Europe. These depict Him scourged, crowned with thorns, or bleeding on the Cross. Such representations are very impressive, yet it is an unworthy emotion that they excite in our breasts. They awaken within us a feeling of compassion, and this is very unfitting. Jesus was never so kingly as when He hung upon the Cross. It was His throne. As the Latin hymn has it, 'He reigned from the Tree.' The Centurion recognized His

[1] J. Brierley, *Faith's Certainties*, 116.

majesty and confessed, 'Truly this man was the Son of God.' And if that was the emotion of a heathen soldier, what should be ours? We know who He was and wherefore He was hanging there. He was no hopeless victim, but a glorious Priest, offering in the greatness of His free love an infinite Sacrifice for the sin of the world. Christ crucified is God at His grandest; for, in the language of Clement of Alexandria, 'this is the greatest and kingliest work of God—to save mankind.' And it is not compassion, nor even admiration, that the spectacle should inspire, but penitence and adoration. 'Weep not for me' was His word to the pitiful daughters of Jerusalem on the road to Calvary. 'Nothing is here for tears.' Compassion is alike unfitting and unavailing.

The sacred writers tell of the sufferings of Christ, but they ever hasten on to the glory that followed. It is of this that they would have us think. The Saviour whom they commend to our faith is not the Man of Sorrows who trod for a little season the homeless ways of Palestine and was hanged on the Cross of shame, but the Lord of Life who conquered death, and reigns evermore in His glory, and manifests Himself continually to believing souls. The gospel is not a story of defeat and death, but a revelation of victory and life. It was the Resurrection that transfigured the image of Jesus in the minds of the men who had companied with Him. He showed Himself to them alive after His Passion in 'the body of glory'; and the vision thrust 'the body of His humiliation' out of their remembrance. They had known Him after the flesh, but thenceforth they knew Him so no more.

3. Perhaps there is another and deeper reason for their silence about that dear Face which they had been privileged to behold in the daily fellowship of those three years of heavenly manifestation. It was too wonderful for description. They durst not speak of it, but they never forgot it, and the wonder of it was with them to the last. Consider how it lived in the adoring remembrance of St John, and how it kindled his imagination. It still haunted him in the Island of Patmos after the lapse of half a century, and stood in his thought at once for the extremity of awfulness and for the height of blessedness. Is it the terror of the Day of Judgment that is revealed to him? Then it is the Face of Jesus that he sees: 'I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away' (Rev. xx. 11). Or is it the blessedness of heaven that breaks upon his view? Again it is the Face of Jesus that he sees: 'his servants shall do him service; and they shall see his face' (Rev. xxii. 3, 4). What a mingling of majesty and tenderness the Face of Jesus must have displayed since it left such contrary impressions on the mind of the disciple whom He loved!

¶ It comforts me much, I assure you, to think that, whenever God shall call for me, angels will carry me into the bosom of Abraham; but it comforts me more to think, that, as soon as they lay hold of me, my first question to them will be, 'Where is my *Master*? Where is my *Jesus*?' And that, after all my tossings and tumblings here, I shall be brought to see His face at last.[1]

Jesus had no manner of resemblance to the Messiah whom the Jews were expecting in those days. When Simon came face to face with Him, wherefore did he not turn to his brother and exclaim derisively: 'This the Messiah, the King of Israel! Where is His crown, His sword, His regal train?' The thought may have been in his heart for a moment, but it never got to his lips. The Evangelist tells us why. 'Jesus looked upon him.' A look—that was all, and Simon's doubt was dispelled, his soul bowed in adoration, and his heart was won for ever. And at the close of the gospel story when Peter had denied his Lord it was a look that broke his heart. He 'went out, and wept bitterly.'

What was there in the Face of Jesus that a look of it should have had such power, mastering men and leading them captive, reproving them and putting them to confusion? Think of the Love which dwelt in His heart—and which, when nothing less would serve, had clothed itself in flesh and come down into their midst to show them the Father's mercy and lead them home to the Father's house. There was penetration, too, in the look of that wondrous Face, in 'those eyes of far perception.'

> Those great eyes which do not hate, nor
> blast,
> But send a keen light to my inmost self.

[1] L. Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*, ii. 562.

It searched men through and through, read their thoughts, discovered their secrets. And its potency remains. The very thought of Jesus is still a rebuke, an incentive, and an inspiration; and the realization of His presence is a consecration. What matters the judgment of the multitude, if we win His high applause?

Penitence

Luke xxii. 61, 62.—'And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. . . . And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.'

Every man at some time in his life has fallen. Many have fallen many times; few, few times. We have all shuddered often as we read the tale of Peter's guilt. Many a time we have watched the plot as it thickens round him, and felt the almost unconscious sympathy which betrayed of itself how like the story was to one that had sometimes happened to ourselves. And we knew, as we followed the dreary stages of his fall, that the same well-worn steps had been traced since then by every human foot. The faithfulness that made him follow Christ far off instead of keeping at his Master's side not the best of us will challenge. For we, too, know what it is sometimes to get out of step with Christ. We shall be the last to stop and ask his business in that worldly company who warmed themselves by the fire. And none who know that the heart is deceitful above all things will wonder that this man, when his ears were yet full of the most solemn words the world had ever heard, when his heart was warm still with Communion-table thoughts, should have turned his back upon his Lord, and, almost ere the sacramental wine was dry upon his lips, have cursed Him to His face. Such things, alas! are not strange to those who know the parts in the appalling tragedy of sin.

'Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured,
Him
Who trod the sea and brought the dead to life?
What should wring this from thee?'—ye laugh
and ask.
What wrung it? Even a torchlight and a
noise,
The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,
And fear of what the Jews might do! Just that,
And it is written, 'I forsook and fled.'[1]

[1] Browning, *A Death in the Desert.*

But there is a greater fact in Peter's life than Peter's sin—a much less known fact—Peter's penitence. All the world is at one with Peter in his sin; but not all the world is with him in his penitence. Sinful Peter is one man, and repentant Peter is another; and many who have kept his company along these worn steps to sin have left him to trace the tear-washed path to penitence alone. But the real lesson in Peter's life is the lesson in repentance.

'And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. . . . And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.' These words contain materials for the analysis of the most rare and difficult grace in spiritual experience. We find in them four outstanding characteristics of the state of penitence.

1. Penitence is *a Divine thing*. We find that the beginning of this strange experience came from God. It was not Peter who turned. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. When the cock crew, that might have recalled him to himself. But he was just in the very act of sin. And when a man is in the thick of his sin his last thought is to throw down his arms and repent. So Peter never thought of turning, but the Lord turned; and when Peter would rather have looked anywhere else than at the Lord, the Lord looked at Peter. And this scarce-noticed fact is a great sermon to every one who sins—that the Lord turns first.

Now the result of this distinction is that there are two kinds of sorrow for sin. And these are different in their origin, in their religious value, and in their influence on our life. The commoner kind is when a man does wrong, and, in the ordinary sense of the word, is sorry that he has done it. We are always easier in such a case when this sorrow comes. We count this feeling of reproach which treads so closely on the act as a sort of compensation or atonement for the wrong. But it is a startling truth that there is no *religion* in such a state. It is no true sorrow for sin. It is wounded self-love. It is sorrow that we were weak enough to sin. We thought we had been stronger men and women, and when we were put to the test we found to our chagrin that we had failed. And this chagrin is what we are apt to mistake for penitence. But it is no Divine gift or grace, this penitence; it is just as if Peter turned and looked upon Peter. And if God had not looked

upon Peter he might have wept wellnigh as bitterly, not because he had sinned against his God, but because he, the great Apostle, was weak as other men.

Contrast for a moment with such a penitence the publican's prayer in the Temple. It was no chagrin nor wounded pride with him. And we feel as we read the story that the Lord must have turned and looked upon the publican, when he cried 'God'—as if God were looking right down into the man's eyes—'God be merciful to me, a sinner!' Stricken before his God, this publican had little thought of the self-respect he had lost, and felt it no indignity to take the culprit's place and be taught the true divinity of a culprit's penitence.

Now it will be seen at once that the difference between the publican's penitence and the first-named sorrow is just the difference between the Divine and the human. The one is God turning and looking upon man, the other is man turning and looking upon himself. There is no wrong in a man turning and looking upon himself—only there is danger. There is the danger of misinterpreting what he sees and what he feels. What he feels is the self-reproach of the sculptor who has made an unlucky stroke of the chisel. Apart altogether from religion we must feel mortified when we do wrong. Life, surely, is a work of art; character-building, soul-culture are the highest kind of art; and it would be strange indeed if failure passed unresented by the mind. But what is complained of is not that it passes unresented by the mind, but that it passes unresented by the soul. Penitence of some sort there must be, but in the one case it is spiritual, in the other purely artistic.

¶ The author of *De Profundis* did not know himself. He knew many things, but not the one supreme thing it concerned him to know. He thought he saw, but he was blind. He described his sufferings with a poignant but graceful pen, and the ornate sentences follow each other in a kind of floral procession. But the superb style of the writer does not hide from us the emptiness, the vacuity, which lurk beneath all that mass of floral decoration. The confessions are not confessions in any true sense of the word. They are actings rather than confessions. The author imagines himself to be standing before the footlights, and he says, 'I have played the fool,' but he stops short of 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'[1]

2. Penitence is *a sensitive thing*. Rather, perhaps, we should talk of the sensitiveness of the penitent human soul. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. There is nothing more sensitive in all the world than a human soul which has once been quickened into its delicate life by the touch of the Divine. Men seldom estimate aright the exquisite beauty and tenderness of the heart. We apply coarse words to move it, and harsh stimulants to rouse it into life. There is coarseness in the fibres of the body, and that may be moved by blows; and there is coarseness in human nature, and that may be roused with threats; but the soul will preserve, through misery and cruelty and sin, the marvellous delicacy which tells how near it lies to the spirit of God who gave it birth. Our picture of Peter is of a strong-built, sun-tanned fisherman, robust and fearless in disposition, quick-tempered and rash, a man who would bluster and swear—as we know he did—a man who had the making of a memorable sinner had he not become a memorable saint. But inside this wild breast God had placed a most lovely and delicate plant, and with His own breath He nourished it from day to day. So God did not thunder and lighten to make Peter hear His voice. A whisper at that moment—that moment of high-strung feeling—a whisper even was not fine enough in its touch for this sensitive spirit. The Lord turned and *looked*—that was all, but it rent his heart as lightning could not.

There is a text in the Psalms which uses the strange expression, the *gentleness* of God. He is gentle with us all—moulding and winning us many a time with no more than a silent look. Here, then, are two marvels—the gentleness of God, and the gentleness of the soul—the one as Divine as the other. And the reason why God made Peter's heart sensitive, and ours, was to meet this gentleness of His. If we ask ourselves what things have mainly influenced our life, we find the answer in a few silent voices which have preached to us, and winds which passed across our soul so gently that we scarce could tell when they were come or gone. The great physical forces of the world are all silent and unseen.

[1] T. Sanderson.

The light is ever silent;
Most silent of all heavenly silences;
Not even the darkness stiller, nor so still;
Too swift for sound or speech it rushes on
Right through the yielding skies, a massive flood
Of multitudinous beams; an endless sea,
That flows but ebbs not, breaking on the shore
Of this dark earth, with never-ceasing wave,
Yet in its swiftest flow, or fullest spring-tide,
Giving less sound than does one falling blossom,
Which the May breeze lays lightly on the sward.[1]

3. Penitence is *an intense thing*. Peter went out and wept bitterly. And this short sentence for ever settles the question of emotion in religion. When the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and memory crushed into one vivid moment the guilt of those never-to-be-forgotten hours, what else could Peter do than weep bitterly? Let memory so work on any of our lives to-day, and let the eye of the Eternal bring the naked truth from out our past, and let us ask if 'bitterly' is a word too strong to express the agony of God's discovery of our sin. It is vain to console ourselves by measuring, as we try to do, the small size of the slips we make as compared with those of others.

Every sin that was ever done demands a bitter penitence. And if there is little emotion in a man's religion, it is because there is little introspection. Religion without emotion is religion without reflection. Let a man sit calmly down to think about his life. And as he turns over the secrets of his past, and forgotten sins come crowding one by one into his thoughts, can he help a strong emotion rising in his heart? Only let religious emotion run in the right channel, let it work itself out in action and not in excited feeling, and there is no experience more purifying to the soul. No doubt, for Peter, there came out of the bitterness of that night of penitence much of the sweetness that hallowed his after life.

4. Penitence is *a lonely thing*. Peter went out into the quiet night, and was alone with his sin and God. Men know two kinds of loneliness—a loneliness of space and a loneliness of spirit. The fisherman in his boat on the wide sea knows loneliness of space. But it is no true loneliness, for his thoughts have peopled his boat with forms of those he loves. But Peter's was loneliness of spirit. A distance wider than the wide sea cut off the denier from all fellowship of man, and left him to mourn alone. When God speaks He likes no other voice to break the stillness. And hence the place that has always been given to solitude in all true religious life. It can be overdone, but it can be grossly underdone. And there is no lesson more worth insisting on in these days of bustle and strain than just this, that when God wants to speak with a man He wants that man to be alone. 'Talent forms itself in solitude,' says the German poet; 'character amidst the storms of life.' And if religious character is developed and strengthened in the battle of the world, it is no less true that religious talents are cultivated in quiet contemplation and communion with God.

What gave beauty to Peter's repentance was that it was immediate. He need not have gone out at that time. He might have stood where he was, and braved it out. God has looked at us when we were sinning; and we did not do as Peter did. His penitence came sharp upon his sin. It was not on his death-bed nor in his after life, but just when he had sinned. Many a man who postpones his penitence till he cannot help it postpones his penitence till it cannot help him, and will not see the Lord turning till He turns and looks upon him in judgment.[1]

[1] Horatius Bonar, *Hymns of Faith and Hope*, 23.

The Difficulties of Unbelief

Luke xxii. 67, 68.—'Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.'

Jesus had good reason to complain of His accusers. They would not believe in Him. They would not discuss His claims with Him. Nor would they let Him go. Such has always been the attitude of certain types of mind to Jesus—an attitude as illogical as it is unfair. But opposition to Him cannot always elude the issue. Jesus, we admit, is a problem to faith; He is much more a problem for unbelief, and never more so than now.

Let us look for a little at the difficulties of unbelief, and, in order to bring the matter to the test, let us take a hypothetical case, which

[1] H. Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, 201.

is yet not wholly imaginary. Here is a man, born in our land, a man of average intelligence and receptive mind. He was brought up in the old faith and accepted it without serious thought, and perhaps in a somewhat crude form. No great moral decision or spiritual struggle came to him to test his faith and give it back to him, a golden certainty tried by fire. He is hospitable to current thoughts. He has neither the leisure nor the taste to go deep into evidences for or against the Christian position. But the mere fact that he hears many old beliefs questioned, and sees so many of his friends quietly contemptuous of, or indifferent to, religion, imperceptibly affects him. Then some misfortune or disappointment, a reverse in business, a personal sorrow, suddenly shakes him. And if it be true that the miseries of life lead some towards religion, it is also true that for many misfortune is the shock that snaps the cable. Under stress this man surrenders. He does not develop any new vices. He just subsides into a spiritual condition which it is not unfair to describe as comatose. For all practical purposes the force of his example and the weight of his influence are now on the side of unbelief.

Now such a man may think he has done with religion, but of course he has not till he has established his new position. Has he ever considered the extraordinary difficulty of the new position? It is, in our view, a most perilous position; it means the surrender of life's best possessions and the withering of the soul. But for the moment let us ask him if he can make it tenable. He has left the faith because of its difficulties. If he is to be thorough in his unbelief, he must show us that it is comparatively free from difficulty. Can he do that? On three outstanding issues he must, if he is thorough, satisfy himself that the position of unbelief is more tenable and reasonable than that of faith.

1. There is the question whether it is easier to believe, as a matter of pure intellectual outlook, that *the broad path of human history is an ordered, rational way*, with a purpose through it and an end before it, a path crossed and clouded indeed by many shadows, or to believe with the unbeliever that it is an almost unrelieved stretch of dismal country, lightened here and there by faint illusions and fugitive promises that never come to anything, but dominated throughout by a grim and reasonless necessity.

¶ Mr Bertrand Russell, in *Mysticism and Logic*, writes: 'Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way. For Man, condemned to-day to lose his dearest, to-morrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of Fate to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate for a moment his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned, despite the trampling march of unconscious Power.'

Which view is easier to hold as a pure matter of evidence? True, the path of Providence is for none a thornless, rose-covered path. But, on the other hand, it is ludicrously false to say that it is nothing but a maze of wretched and heart-breaking disappointment. On which side does the balance of probability lie? It is as hard—indeed much harder—consistently to disbelieve as it is consistently to believe. When Browning's Bishop has comfortably worked round in his philosophic musings to a negative position, he bethinks him of a new problem.

How can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as Nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again.—
. . . . .
All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt:
We called the chess-board white,—we call it black.

Well, if you do call the chess-board black, grim, irrational, with not a trace of God or purpose in it, then from morning till night the heaven above and the earth beneath, the infinite without you and within, will be flashing contradictions to your words. It were easier, one would say, even for a very imperfect faith to resist all the wiles of the devil than for a strongly guarded unbelief to be proof against the rain of evidences which declare that we are not forlorn and orphaned spirits in a world of mystery, but rather the offspring of the most High God, children of a splendid and immortal destiny. Unbelief meets untold difficulties when it faces the facts.

2. We may press the alternatives a little further, and ask whether it is more difficult to believe in *a God who is fatherly as well as just* than in a Power which is pitiless, unthinking, and remote.

Let us suppose that our hypothetical unbeliever has faced the merciless logic of Huxley's famous simile—also of the chess-board. The picture is of Nature playing chess with a youth. 'Nature never overlooks a mistake, but she is absolutely just. To the winner the stakes are paid with overflowing liberality, while the unskilful player is checkmated without haste and without remorse.' That is the reign of natural law. We recognize the inviolate authority of that rule. But unbelief is bound to say that that is the whole truth. Is it possible to believe that? When we have seen with our own eyes human spirits exulting in suffering for love's sake, when we have seen friends shielding friends, parents children, and children parents, from the consequences of some great sin, when we have seen men rise to sublimity in their forgiveness of a great and cruel wrong, is it easy to believe that nowhere in the universe, beyond Nature if not in Nature, is there any Power kindlier, mightier, more majestic than Nature herself? Hear the words of the sombre prophet of a troubled age:

'His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.' It almost sounds like the modern scientist declaring the uniformity of Nature 'without haste and without remorse.' Yet the difference is immense. 'The Lord is slow to anger.' If a man be not so absorbed in his own calamities as to be blind to every relieving gleam, it must be easier to believe that there is a God with whom is forgiveness than to see the quivering heart of man, its hopes and fears alike, captive in the iron grasp of a tearless destiny. It is no light task for unbelief to banish God from His world.

3. Once more the issue is joined where the difficulties of unbelief become overwhelming—round *the Person of Jesus Christ*. It is certainly difficult for faith to say all that it makes of this supreme spiritual fact. Faith is quite ready to confess that after all the centuries it is only beginning to understand. A restatement of the Catholic doctrine of the Person of Christ shall one day be achieved. When Oriental Christianity joins hands with Western Christianity, when the mysticism of the East combines with the philosophic judgment and practical efficiency of the West, when the whole Christian commonwealth throughout the world brings its enthusiasm and devotion to bear towards one great end, then we shall see expressed, more adequately than in any of the creeds, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—the fullness of the Godhead in Him.

¶ Is it to be supposed that we in our Western civilization, we in our rush and hurry and in the temptation of our engrossment with material things, should know all that there is to be known of the significance of Jesus? Shall not the mind of the Orient, from which He came, teach us more deeply what He is? From the thought of India, cannot our so-called Christian civilization of the West catch again the corrective meaning of Jesus' words, 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the *things* which he possesseth,' and, 'I am come that ye might have *life*.' The young Indian writer, Mukerji, has described how once, as a boy of twelve, he was sent by his father to a Scotch Presbyterian Mission School, and there his thought was bewildered in the underbrush of sectarian theology, till one day out of that weary tangle the understanding of Jesus sprang into his consciousness, sudden and beautiful, 'like a tiger from the jungle.' Do we not need the thought of Jesus, fashioned thus from the poetry of other minds, to spring into our Christian consciousness of the West?[1]

But if faith have its great inquiry and burden-

[1] W. R. Bowie, *The Inescapable Christ*, 55.

some task, does Christ constitute no difficulty for unbelief? Does any man think He can be quietly ignored as a negligible moral quantity? Does any man get rid of Him by a wholesale denial of the miraculous? If Jesus was not such an One as the Gospels declare, you only replace one miracle by another—the miracle of the Portrait. How did that Portrait arise in an age not otherwise of supreme literary distinction unless it was taken from the Life? We are told it is impossible to believe in the Resurrection. But we are not told in that case how an imposture or mistake could have originated the profoundest moral movement in history. We are told that the entire Gospel story moves in the region of the legendary. But we are not told how the legend has been so persistently creative, how the Christ of myth survives to this day, how He comes to be so closely allied to the human conscience that no man who has ever looked at Him across the ages can rid himself of the vision of those haunting eyes. We are told how difficult it is to say, 'My Lord and my God.' It is difficult—it may come in its full significance only after long companionship between Christ and a simple, reverent mind. But we reply that it is impossible for the most reasoned unbelief, if it be not corrupted by evil temper or moral decadence, to look Christ in the face and say, Impostor, Blasphemer. The truth is that few who have come to a negative position face the prospect of a logically completed unbelief—a world stripped of its ideals, a world without God, a permanently faithless world, a world without hope or worship. The moment a man tries to eliminate a spiritual world he has to stand siege from experiences and emotions and facts that leave him as little secure in his unbelief as he felt himself to be in his faith.

If only we faced these difficulties it would be easier for us to walk humbly with our God. But the pity of it is that through intellectual indolence or spiritual unconcern we try to maintain an impossible neutrality. We have no courage to face the consequences of faith any more than we have courage to accept the consequences of unbelief. The result is that even if we think ourselves no enemies of the faith the sum-total of our influence is on the side of unbelief, uncertainty, negation, and materialism. And that position ought to be untenable for any man who would fain leave some mark of greatness on his own time. If only we lifted our hearts from selfishness and cherished sin we should find the Revelation of God bending towards us. If only we looked, not with level eyes to the mists that are ever over the broad plains of life, but higher, like the Alps, whose domes of snow are rosy in the setting sun, we should see the glory of God. But it is not the setting sun that lights the Church of God, the Church of all who love Him, on its great pilgrimage. It is the light of the morning, the light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The Question of Questions

Luke xxii. 70.—'Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.'

A CAREFUL study of the four Gospels shows us that our Lord was subjected to three examinations by the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities. The first was quite private, in the presence only of Annas and Caiaphas, the High Priest. The second was before an informal meeting of the Sanhedrin, at which witnesses were examined, but the Lord preserved an unbroken silence until the High Priest put him on oath: 'I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed.' Then Jesus said: 'I am.' On hearing this, they resolved on a verdict of guilty of a capital offence. But they had to hold a formal meeting in the morning to ratify the informal decision. And there again the same question was put to Christ, and received the same answer—'I am the Son of God.' Let us inquire what Christ meant by this, and what is the significance of it for our salvation.

1. *The Meaning of Jesus' Claim.*—What did Jesus of Nazareth mean when He said, 'I am the Son of God'?

The simplest answer to that is that He meant exactly the same thing as His enemies meant who put the question, and who were so shocked at the reply. It is hardly likely that many of them expected it. Caiaphas and Annas probably were under no mistake. They reckoned on this to secure His condemnation. But the others were not so penetrating. Extravagant, presumptuous as they thought Him, quite cap-

able of claiming to be the Christ, the Messiah, they did not think He would stand to it on reflection, and when He saw that it would mean a sentence of death, that He was the Son of God. And there was genuineness in their horror at the idea that a mere man should claim to be equal with God. When Jesus said, 'I am the Son of God,' these men thought that He set up a claim to be in some way God's equal, in some way to possess God's nature, to be Divine. And they were horrified at such impiety.

Did Jesus really mean that? Everything seems to say that He did. It was not the first time that He had acquiesced in sayings like this. He had assented to Peter's confession: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' He had claimed an intimacy with God possessed by Himself and by no other as the explanation of His power to work miracles and to reveal the Father. But special force attaches to this statement before His judges. On His reply to them His life depended. Had He meant one thing and they another, would He have made or persisted in a statement which would be His death, if a modification of it could have been made? Certainly not; that would have been mere foolish obstinacy and a throwing away of life. But He not only makes the statement at the first appearance before the Sanhedrin; He adheres to it at the second and final appearance, when He might have escaped had He withdrawn that claim. In place of that He reasserted it as firmly as ever, and in their sense. He not only means that He is the Christ, the Messiah, for a man might have claimed to be that without blasphemy; but He puts His claim to be the Messiah in such terms as carry the thought of it beyond the compass of mere humanity, for He adds to it, 'Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.' And when they ask next, as if this did mean that He claimed to be Divine, though they thought such a thing incredible, 'Art thou then—did you really mean it, and do you adhere to it?—art thou then the Son of God?' 'Yes,' He answers, as calmly and firmly as ever, 'I am.'

How is it with us? Do *we* believe Him? Yes? Well, why do we take it so phlegmatically? When these men heard it, they rent their garments in horror at hearing what they believed to be such impious claims from the lips of a man. Jesus of Nazareth said it, and we feel nothing, treat it as a matter of course. Think what God means, and then what this means, and realize the mystery, the *prima facie* incredibility of it, that perchance you may reach the amazing import of the truth of it. Rather anything—even that outburst of horror, that howl of execration, that torrent of insult and abuse—than that cold indifference that hears, as if it were but the stale news of a year-old newspaper, the momentous fact that Jesus was indeed the Son of God.

2. *The Evidences of its Truth.*—What are the evidences of the truth of this statement? Well, there is, first, the experience of the Apostles, the men with whom He associated most closely, and who knew Him best. They believed that He was the Son of God. Think of that. These men who ate with Him, drank with Him, walked with Him, talked with Him came to believe that this companion of theirs was the Son of God, was God manifest in flesh. They did not know it at first. But things happened through Him; He did things, He said things that took their breath away, set them a-wondering and questioning, perplexed and awed, as to whom He really could be. There was an impressiveness, a power, a wealth of interest and understanding and sympathy, a grasp of the infinite significance of things, which suggested to these Jews that in Jesus there was something akin to Divinity. It dawned on them that God was in Him, not only as He had been in their old prophets, but in a quite new way. And then, when after the Crucifixion and Burial there came the Resurrection and the Ascension, the Divinity of their Lord simply flooded them with wonder and conviction and adoration.

'Yes,' some may say, 'but with others the impression was very different. To say nothing of the envenomed enemies, there were thousands who felt no such unusual significance about Him, or, if they did, it was a mere passing phase, was nothing lasting.' And that is true, but what is it worth? Nothing. It only illustrates the density of most men. It only brings out what is all too common—the obliviousness of the majority to distinction if it lies in what they are familiar with, or are in daily, immediate touch with. 'A prophet is not without honour save in his own country.' Do you remember who said that? That is Christ's own

account of it. Except in the case of those with spiritual insight, most of the contemporaries of Jesus were too near Him, too much impressed with their own importance, and too much encased in prejudice and conventionality, to recognize Him. To see aright the grandest masterpieces of art, even those which will also bear minute inspection, you must stand back. So with great characters; so with Christ. We need to put away prejudice and preconceptions. We need to rid ourselves of the domination of conventional ideas prevalent for the time being, and face facts and the meaning of facts. And there is the fact of Christ before us. Stand back; look with eyes washed in the waters of sincerity at Jesus Christ, and you will see in Him what He out of His own consciousness says is there—God manifest in the flesh.

Lord, I was blind, I could not see
In Thy marred visage any grace,
But now the beauty of Thy face
In radiant vision dawns on me.

Still more, look at the evidence to which Christ appeals when so solemnly, and under such critical circumstances, claiming to be the Son of God. His appeal is to the future. 'Nevertheless, henceforth, from now on, ye shall see the Son of man seated at the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' What is the meaning of that 'nevertheless'? It means that, in spite of appearances, from this day on, the truth will be forced home upon men, by the controlling influence which He will exert on the world's history that this is none other than God Himself in human form. Such calm assurance of the goodness of His cause might well have made even these men pause. But beyond that the argument for them had little weight. Their reply was fair enough: 'This appeal to the future is easy, any impostor might make it: only time will show.' And that was a good enough excuse for them. But, indeed, time *has* shown. That argument, of slender weight for them, is ponderous for us. In the face of it our guilt must be far deeper than even that of the men who crucified Him if we reject Christ: His words have been absolutely fulfilled. Strip them of the figurative dress, and is it not literally true that since that day, the day on which He was crucified, Jesus of Nazareth and the influence of His character and teaching, and the meaning of His life and death, have been the determining factors in the course of the world's history? They have determined the lines of national development. They have fixed the course of philosophic thought. They have controlled the order of social progress. It is the steady spread of the faith in Jesus Christ that has transformed the world from the darkness of paganism, or the twilight of classic civilization, to the warmth and light and sunshine of the best of modern life.

¶ A Civil servant was returning home on furlough after a few years' stay in India, and could be heard loudly ridiculing the Christian missionaries for their 'meddlesome' work in that country. A native, standing by, courteously asked him how long he had lived in India. 'Two years,' was the reply. 'Were it not for the missionaries, Sir,' rejoined the native, 'you could not have lived there two hours.'[1]

3. *The Significance of the Claim.*—What is the significance of His Divinity for our salvation? This is such a vast subject that we can do no more than touch the fringe of it. Let us take two points.

(1) The significance of Christ's Divinity for our salvation is just this, that if He is the Son of God, then what He did God did. His work is God's work. So far as His teaching is concerned, and apart from its being interwoven with His claim, it would still be matchless were He but a man. His example would be commanding still, though He were only human. But to be a revelation of God's own love to us, of God's willingness to go any length to reawaken faith and love in our hearts to Him, then the sufferer must be so intimately linked with God that in Him God suffers, His love reveals God's love. And it does, for He who died for us was the Son of God, whom the Father gave, who gave Himself, that the pardoning love of God might be revealed.

Save through the flesh Thou wouldst not come
to me—
The flesh, wherein Thy strength my weakness
found,
A weight to bow Thy Godhead to the ground,
And lift to heaven a lost humanity.[2]

[1] J. H. Howard, *Which Jesus?* 31.
[2] J. B. Tabb.

(2) But there is this, too. If Jesus is Divine, if He is the Son of God, then how marvellously close God can come to man, to what a pitch of perfection human nature may reach! Look at it either way, it is the making of us. God in human flesh! Then it is not incredible that He can come into the heart and cleanse it, and make it a fit abode for Himself. If He could mix with men as Jesus did, He may dwell with us still, and home, state, and society, business, trade, and commerce may all be sanctified by the presence of God. And, on the other hand, if human nature could be fitted out to serve the requirements of God Himself in the most serious task that ever Godhead accomplished, what may not we make it? This bodily frame, this human intellect, this human heart and will are fit for the Divinest tasks, to think the loftiest thoughts, to cherish the most generous emotions, and pursue the most arduous course, if need be, to secure the highest ends. After we have seen God in Christ let us never belittle even the most insignificant, or the races lowest in the scale of civilization. This nature of ours is one, and God has found it an instrument fit for His use. If our own incapacity still breeds misgivings, let us surrender ourselves all the more to God, that His spirit may take us in hand, dwell in us, and make us what He would.

Pilate

Luke xxiii. 1.—'And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.'

The constitution of Palestine and the neighbouring countries during the momentous period which witnessed the ministry of Jesus resembled on a small scale that of India to-day. There was the Roman province of Syria, ruled by a legate, a man of senatorial rank, who had held the highest office of State, and responsible, like the English viceroy, to the Government in the Empire City. There were the native States, the tetrarchies, ruled by princelings with sounding titles and some real power, but bound by Roman authority in all matters of importance as completely as Indian Mahârâjahs are bound by British will. And there was the little province of Judæa, ruled by a Roman 'governor' or Procurator,—of inferior rank.

We know nothing of Pilate apart from his administration of Judæa. Philo quotes from Agrippa I. a comprehensive account of the man: 'Inflexibly obstinate by nature, he was as reckless as he was implacable.' And his acts abundantly bear out this description. Incapable himself of understanding why anyone should care 'what is truth,' he set himself from the first to trample upon the religious prejudices which he so heartily despised. He impounded the Temple treasures to build an aqueduct, and overawed the people by scattering among them plain-clothes men secretly armed with clubs. St Luke tells us of Galilæan pilgrims, otherwise unknown, whose blood Pilate mingled with the sacrifices they came to offer.

In the fourth or fifth year of his office, the year A.D. 30, as generally reckoned, Pilate came up from Cæsarea to Jerusalem for the Passover week, a time when the enormous crowds filling the Holy City needed watchful supervision from the Governor. Early in the morning of April 7 the watchful Procurator was aware that some greater excitement than usual was agitating the turbulent priests and their following. It seems very likely that he was more or less forewarned. From the mention of a *cohort* in John xviii. 3, we gather that Pilate must have been asked the previous evening to lend his men for the arrest of a dangerous agitator, who should be brought to him when the Sanhedrin had judged the case. The knowledge of this arrest accounts for Pilate's readiness when the sacerdotal accusers appeared, dragging along with them their prisoner to the open space in front of the Governor's residence (the 'Prætorium'); and Pilate knew they would come no farther, as it would mean 'defilement.' He yielded to the prejudices he so heartily despised, but we may well fancy that the concession did not increase his amiability towards the Jewish curs who, forsooth, regarded a Roman knight as unclean. He went out to them, and asked what accusation they brought against the man whom they were delivering to him. Their answer, attempting to make Pilate merely register their decree, shows that they expected no opposition. Why was it that he offered such unexpected resistance, and insisted on examining the prisoner for himself? Perhaps because he had previous knowledge of Jesus. It is most unlikely that the acute and watchful Procurator was ignorant of the very existence of a Prophet who moved

the multitudes so profoundly. Proceeding to examine Jesus for himself within the fortress, Pilate regarded his Prisoner as a harmless fanatic whom envious priests pursued with deadly hatred because He was more popular than themselves. But a few minutes sufficed to produce a new sensation in the Governor's mind. The majestic avowal of kingship, but kingship 'not of this world,' and the mysterious allusions to 'the Truth,' reinforced a little later by the message Pilate received from his wife, made him dimly feel that the Man before him was very different from other prisoners whom he had sent to their death so lightly. With an impatient word expressing his despair of reaching the only kind of 'truth' he cared for, he went out into the open space where the Jewish leaders waited, and openly declared 'I find no fault in this man.'

If Pilate had ended there, and adhered to his sense of justice, all would have been well. But he had his other aims and ends. He had his fear of danger to his official advancement. He had his absorbing ambition for success in the imperial world of honour and wealth. He would avoid, if possible, any direct conflict between conscience and criminal expediency, between duty and self-interest. Now is the only time for Pilate to exert his authority. But this is hid from his eyes. He decides to resort to certain devices, which he hopes will satisfy both conscience and expediency.

Not an ear in court or market for the low foreboding cry
Of those Crises, God's stern winnowers, from whose feet earth's chaff must fly;
Never shows the choice momentous till the judgment hath passed by.

1. Pilate's first device to escape from this difficulty of choosing between right and wrong is to throw his burden on to other shoulders. Hearing that Jesus came from Galilee, and Herod its tetrarch being in Jerusalem at the time, he sends Him on to Herod as a subject of his jurisdiction. The result is just as Pilate had thought and wished. Herod, too, found no cause of guilt in Him. Pilate can now appeal to Herod's agreement with himself as a just reason for acquitting Him. But he is dealing with men and with a power behind them that take little heed either of justice or of truth. They care not for Herod's opinion any more than for Pilate's. They continue their threatening clamour, and force their demand all the more violently as they perceive the weak and evasive resistance offered to them.

¶ Do you remember Munkacsy's great picture of 'Christ before Pilate'? There is Jesus calm, majestic, with holy innocence stamped upon His brow; there is the bawling and howling mob clamouring for His blood; and there on the bench is Pilate with knit brow and troubled face, the very picture of hesitation and irresolution. He was trying to settle this question, 'What shall I do unto Jesus who is called Christ?' He had said He was innocent—that was easy enough—but what was he to do.

2. His first effort having failed, he bethinks him of a second device, which seems to promise relief from the pressure of his difficulty. It is the Passover, and there is under sentence of death a notorious robber and murderer, Barabbas. Pilate avails himself of the paschal custom of releasing a condemned prisoner, and places our Lord, uncondemned as He still is, by the side of Barabbas, bidding the multitude choose and decide which of the two shall be released. It was natural to suppose that no reasonable man could fail to choose Jesus rather than Barabbas. But here again passion is not reasonable; sin is tyrannical in its persistence, and, like a storm-swept sea, grows all the more violent as it finds obstacles opposed to it. The crowd, swayed by the chief priests and Pharisees, cry out in answer to Pilate, 'Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.' A second time Pilate has failed, and his latter plight is even worse than his first. A duty evaded, a principle compromised, a conscience more than half cheated do not lessen the difficulties of resisting temptation and avoiding wrong. All experience points to the fact that it is easier to overcome a difficulty in its first beginnings than in its later development. Compromise with evil, or with temptation, does not lessen its force but rather feeds its flame and intensifies its violence.

3. Intensely anxious to acquit his Prisoner, he makes another effort, offers to meet the accusers half-way, and out of deference to their wishes he will chastise Jesus if they will consent to let Him go. He hopes thus to appeal to a lingering

sense of humanity and justice, when the Victim of all the outcry is seen to have suffered so pitiably. His sentence is carried out, and the soldiers add to the outrage the further indignity of crowning their Victim with thorns, and brutally performing the jest of doing Him homage as a mock king. All this serves Pilate's purpose, as his desire is to lead the crowd to cry 'Enough.' But here again Pilate fails, and fails finally in his attempt to avoid crime by compounding with crime. Sin is much more disposed to increase rather than to lessen its demands for such measures of compromise to succeed. He has satisfied no one concerned, neither the fierce multitude, nor the innocent Victim, nor his own conscience. The cry resounds all the louder, and the demand becomes more imperious and threatening—'If thou release this man thou art not Cæsar's friend.' They could easily forward to Rome the information that the Procurator had acquitted one who claimed royalty, and the probable consequences of such an accusation surged into Pilate's mind and decided him. He would risk the wrath of Heaven but not the wrath of Tiberius. Once more he enters Antonia, brings Jesus forth, takes his seat upon the tribunal erected in the open air close by the Temple front, and pronounces the sentence of death. And for us Pilate's history closes with his '*Ibis in crucem.*'

4. It is easy for us to declaim against the weakness which dare not encounter an angry mob or face indefinite possibilities from a cruel and irresponsible tyrant. Let us look to ourselves ere we fasten too much scorn on Pilate for sins like those. The lesson of Pilate's crime lies deeper. One day came upon him suddenly to make or mar him for all time. Are we to excuse his failure because he was only a heathen, because he knew not the tremendous issue before him? No. If he was a heathen, he was a Roman, and knew what justice meant by an instinct ingrained in the very fibre of a Roman's being. What was it that made the gravity of his crime? It was that his whole life foredoomed his action on the crisis day.

Pilate feared Cæsar because of his past record of crime, misgovernment, and blood. *Therefore* on the one day when by a firm stand for the simple right which he saw so clearly he could have transformed eternity for himself, he fell. He tried to gain his end by crooked paths, and at last slid open-eyed into the morass where the votaries of expediency are sooner or later found struggling in vain. Some day perhaps *our* testing time will come. A mighty temptation will suddenly sweep upon us out of the darkness unawares; an opportunity will appear and clamour for instant choice—a choice between heroism bought with pain and cowardice or crime recommended by ease and seeming safety. How shall we meet that crisis? Let Pilate's life warn us. We build today the man that will triumph or turn craven then. Had Pilate, up to his light, been 'of the truth,' he would have heard the Voice which could save him. We must train our ear to hear His voice now, in the quiet of little lives and little duties. And when the earthquake crashes and the fire blazes around us, we shall, in the terror, hear the still small Voice which will tell us, 'This is the Way,' and the Truth, and the Life.

¶ George Eliot has drawn for us, in *Romola*, a wonderfully true picture of a man who reached the depths of depravity simply through the habit of always yielding to selfish interest. In describing one of Tito Melema's base actions, she says, 'Tito now experienced that inexorable law of human souls, that we prepare ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil which gradually determines character.'

Christ, the King

Luke xxiii. 3.—'And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.'

1. In our Lord's day the Jews had great hopes of deliverance and restored greatness to their nation. These had taken shape in the idea that there was a kingdom to be established of which Jerusalem was to be the capital, God Himself the King, and His Messiah a visible Vicegerent or Viceroy of God. It took this national, material form. This thought was in every mind more or less clearly defined and hopeful according to temperament. They relied on the clear prophecies in the Old Testament, that a great successor should 'sit on the throne of David'; that 'a kingdom

should be established which should never be destroyed.' We cannot wonder that the people interpreted these words literally. We constantly make similar mistakes, confusing the spirit and the letter—things of the heart and soul with things that are visible and tangible.

But we must also remember that lying below the surface of the Old Testament is a loftier and greater and more spiritual conception of the future kingdom. The later Isaiah, and the writer of the Book of Deuteronomy in particular, plainly had such a spiritual kingdom before their eyes—a kingdom which was to overspread the earth with righteousness, and weld all nations together in a common relation to God. The same thought is present in many of the Psalms. This glorious conception of an ennobled humanity, however, faded away as the centuries passed; the Jews became more exclusive in their claim to God's favour, more hard and self-righteous, more blind to the light of God shining outside their own nation. Religion became a transaction, a duty, not a life of the soul.

Then came Christ; and nothing more surprised the people than His recurrence to the nobler and wider thought of the kingdom as spiritual. The people marvelled at His teaching, but the priests and Pharisees hated it. It is so pleasant to be exclusive and so upsetting to have one's complacency disturbed as Christ disturbed theirs. When Pilate put the question, 'Art thou the King of the Jews,' Jesus answered, 'I am.' But He continued, 'My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews.' He was a King in the truest sense though not as the rulers of the Jews meant it. He was no rival of a Cæsar, His kingdom had no territorial boundaries, His legions were no fighting army. His rule was over the minds and hearts of men. His kingdom was a spiritual kingdom.

2. Now let us see what is meant by speaking of Christ as proclaiming a spiritual kingdom.

(1) It means this first—that *humility* is the test of greatness in this new spiritual kingdom: he who serves most is the greatest of all. 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise authority upon them; but so it shall not be among you.' That is the first law of the kingdom; and this reverses all our ordinary notions at once and finally. It is a kingdom because all are to be filled with loyalty to one King; but its high posts are filled not by the great, but by the lowly. Hence there is nothing to attract the eye in the kingdom: 'the kingdom of God is already among you'; it 'comes not with observation.' The disciples still thought of the externals of a king—of rank, grandeur, power, and sitting on thrones judging the twelve tribes—at any rate of privileges. Up to the end 'they hoped,' as the disciples said, 'that it should have been he that should have redeemed Israel'; at the end they thought Christ's mission a failure, and all forsook Him and fled. And we, too, find it hard to understand. It is common teaching to say that the Church is the Kingdom of God, but the Kingdom of God is the sum total of the hearts and lives in which the Spirit of Christ, in all His love to God and man, is living and working, and only so far as the Church is filled with Christ's Spirit, and understood to include all who are so filled, is it the Kingdom of God. There is the true kingdom, in whatever fold on earth they are found, in whatever regiment they serve our Master. So we see that in Christ's thought the qualification for membership is the spirit of service and loyalty in the temper and character of the beatitudes—the temper and character of the meek, the humble, the merciful, the pure. This is the first distinctive and startlingly new mark of Christ's teaching as to the kingdom; it is the reign of God in human hearts, making them willing to serve Him. That desire binds them all together in loyalty to their common Head, and therefore in mutual helpfulness.

¶ Christian Imperialism is secured by the quiet dominance of the meek. There is no place for arrogance in the Empire of the Spirit. Fellowship is its law, whilst its boundaries are as wide as human life. Its spirit is the spirit of meekness—at once active and patient. Its self-sacrifice is the measure of its power. Those who would live worthy of this imperial power must be animated by a passionate devotion to the will of God and the service of man. They will recognize that they are important only in proportion as they learn to serve.[1]

¶ What made those two men, born the same year, one on that side of the water, one on this, men so unlike in the whole outward setting of their lives and so essentially in agreement

[1] Essays from *The Times*.

of spirit—what made those two men, William Ewart Gladstone and Abraham Lincoln, so highly esteemed and so widely beloved?

Gladstone was born to wealth. He had a fine social position. He had all that education could do for a man. He enjoyed the benefits of foreign travel. He thrice became Prime Minister of the British Empire and was esteemed great. Abraham Lincoln was poor. He was born in a log cabin. He was never allowed to attend school but twelve months in his whole life. He was one of the homeliest men who ever walked, and he knew little about the conventions of 'society.' He was never outside of the United States. But he, too, became genuinely great.

These men were esteemed because they tried and died to serve. However men might agree or disagree with some of the policies of Gladstone, they came to feel that here was a man bent upon laying his splendid abilities upon the altar of service in the British Empire. And Abraham Lincoln lived in the spirit of that Book which John Hay, his Secretary, tells us lay always on his desk, and in which he was accustomed to read every day.[1]

(2) The next distinctive mark is *growth*. This, again, ought to be a familiar thought to us, but it is not. The teaching is that there is 'first the blade, then the ear, after that the ripe corn in the ear.' We are familiar with it, of course, up to a certain point; but our grasp of this teaching very often fails just where it is most distinctive; just where Christ's teaching differs from all that went before; just in what makes it the gospel of Christ. This is the way to think out what Christ really meant, by thinking out what the notions were which He came to supersede, and to enlarge and spiritualize. He came to supersede the notion of the common people that the kingdom was material and national; but He came also to enlarge and spiritualize John's thought. Do you remember the characteristic words, 'He will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire'? John's thought was one of selection—a chosen few.

Now this is alien to Christ's leading thought, however near it may be to ours, and however much seems to confirm it. All Christ's parables and teaching about the kingdom represent it as always here, and always growing. Some of His parables dwell on the growth of it in the soul of the individual; some on its extension in the world; some on its hindrances; some on its mixture at present. Its growth may be slow, but the kingdom is Christ's view of the destiny of mankind. Hence, if one is asked whether Christ spoke of the kingdom as something present, or as something future, the only possible answer is that He thought of it as both; and if one is asked to define the Kingdom of God, it is impossible—it is a reality too large to define.

3. What, then, are we pledged to do and to be as members of Christ's kingdom? That kingdom is spiritual, and it is ever growing. Is it not plain that we are pledged to try to conform our motives and standards of action to that which we believe Christ would approve as His own?

In the case of the Roman Governor we see that his opinions were right, but that was not enough. He thought rightly—he acted wrongly. Since, then, it is possible for a man to think rightly of Jesus and yet act wrongly by Him, it becomes needful to insist that it is the attitude and not the opinion that counts. Our Lord said so Himself again and again and again. 'Not every one,' He said on one occasion, 'that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.'

It is not what we think of Christ but what we do with Him that decides our place and settles our destiny. It is not our opinion but our practical attitude that counts. There are numbers of people whose opinions are as correct as opinions can very well be, whose practical attitude is all wrong. They acknowledge Christ as God's Son and then neglect and ignore Him in life. They call Him Lord, and then repudiate His authority.

¶ Recall the *Rois Fainéants* in France—'the Puppet Kings.' The name was given to the later kings of the Merovingian dynasty. They were only sham kings. They were kings who were not allowed to rule. They were given the royal title and men paid a kind of ceremonial respect to them. But they had no power. The country yielded them no obedience. The people gave them the royal title, but none of the royal authority. They called them 'Lord'

[1] C. R. Brown, *Yale Talks*, 18.

—but gave their service and duty to another. And that is how multitudes treat Christ. They give Him the royal title. They say He is their King. But He is only a *roi fainéant*—a puppet king. He has the name and not the substance of royalty. For He does not rule.[1]

If we profess to be members at all of Christ's kingdom, we should be so whole-heartedly and joyfully; not with all the reservations, and qualifications, and limitations which we invent. Membership of that kingdom does not present itself in the gospels as the sharing in any intellectual conceptions about the mysteries of God and man, of the present and of the future; but simply in the faithful resolution to stand or fall by the noblest we know, to make truth our aim, to follow wherever Christ leads. It begins in an experiment: 'Follow me.' We commit ourselves to acting in His spirit. And it ends in an experience, the experience of His presence and approval: 'We know whom we have believed.'

Herod

Luke xxiii. 8, 9.—'And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.'

1. There is in the whole New Testament scarcely any situation more dramatic or more suggestive than the great judgment scene in which King Herod, for the first and for the last time, comes face to face with Jesus Christ.

The New Testament does no more than hint at the dark deed which lay at the back of Herod's life. He had wrecked the home of his own brother, Philip. For this John the Baptist had rebuked him openly. All honour to that lonely man who, for the sake of God and the decencies of life, withstood to the face a king! But Herod promptly cast John into prison. There, in Macherus, the walls of his prison washed by the waves of the Dead Sea, the good man lay, while Herod seemed to be quite happy, enjoying the fruits of his sin—for a season!

Time passed, and when next we meet Herod he seems quite comfortable in his own mind. He has got over the inconvenience and disturbance which the Baptist by his outspokenness had raised. We have no doubt that the Baptist's words had troubled the king. There is, after all, a tremendous force in truth. After all, something does happen when one man with the majesty of God in his face confronts another who has committed a crime. And the very fact that Herod cast John into prison proves that he was afraid of John and that John's words had made him wince. But when we next see Herod, he has got over all that. Indeed, there we have given the formula for Herod: he was one of those who set themselves to get over the private scruples and disturbances of their conscience.

It is at a feast that we next see him. It is a vulgar scene. The daughter of Herodias danced before Herod—a thing accounted disgraceful among Oriental women, to dance publicly before males—and the king, dazed with wine and excited in all kinds of low ways, promised her anything she might ask 'even to the half of his kingdom.' The daughter consulted her mother: whereupon the mother, who had never forgiven the Baptist for having called things by their right names, suggested to her to ask the head of John in a charger.

It is at this point that we see the fairness, the justice, the kindness even, of the Bible. We read that Herod himself shuddered at the proposal. Now, a moral shudder is a sign of life. For one moment, everything was possible for Herod—even the best. But if a man like Herod, a man with such a life behind him, and so surrounded by companions, will not act on the spur of the moment, it is already too late. The dark waters through which, for one instant, God had cleft a way, next moment come together again and roll over his soul.

Herod, we read, 'was sorry.' He saw quite clearly what he ought to do. If he had only dared be true to himself! If he had only launched out upon that tide of moral protest and power which was straining at all his anchors! If he had only encouraged that might of God which was marching to the deliverance of his spirit, and thrown open the gates, seeing God and seeing nothing else for the greatness of that light, like one who cried:—

> Though I be lost,
> I know which is the better, never fear,
> Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
> . . . I see what I have done

[1] J. D. Jones.

Entirely now! Oh, I am proud to feel
Such torments. . . .
I, having done my deed, pay too its price;
. . . God's in His heaven![1]

But the moment was up! Next moment, the waters of his Bethesda pool had sunk and the virtue was departed from them. He looked round upon the company, and the old things, the things he had grown accustomed to, mastered him. He saw how much it would mean to alter his ways or to do anything out of keeping with his previous history. The tide from God which had offered itself to him had ebbed; to do anything unusual or difficult now, was as idle and ridiculous as some great part we have just been playing in a dream appears to ourselves when we awake. Herod gave orders that the head of the Baptist should forthwith be brought in a charger. And the thing was done.

We catch a glimpse of Herod once again after this. He had heard of Jesus, of His miracles, and of the influence He was exerting among the people. And, it may be, the old scar stood out for a moment upon Herod's brow. He was sure that it was John the Baptist risen from the dead. So it was, indeed: it *was* John risen again in Jesus. But Herod could not have understood an idea like that, and in any case he was not the man to be moved or made uneasy by such a subtlety. To him, it was not John; and when he was quite assured about that, his conscience, which had raised its head from the pillow for a moment and looked around, lay down again and went to sleep.

So far as we can judge from the subsequent history, this sleep was 'unto death.' It would seem that his conscience never troubled him further. One whole side of his nature—the side which looks towards God—had died. Things which at one time might have irritated his conscience for a little while had now lost the power to do even so much. He could rub his old wounds without pain; indeed, with a kind of pride in his own toughness and experience of life. He was 'past feeling.'

¶ One day, in the life of Father Damien, the saintly missionary to the lepers in the South Sea Islands, a pot of boiling water fell on his feet: *and he felt no pain.* By that token he knew that he was a leper, and that the disease had gone so far: that where he felt no pain, in that region he was already dead.[1]

Such the man, such the atmosphere, that now faced our Lord. Herod's reception of Jesus is thoroughly characteristic. Conscience is a perishable article; and the man who a while since had been moved to terror by the mere mention of Jesus is now, when he sees Him, 'exceeding glad.' Gratified curiosity takes the place of fear, for 'he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.' Possibly Herod thought that in such august presence the Galilæan would be glad to display His skill. He stood before Jesus, without shame, without any stirring of moral delicacy, and put to Him some idle and curious questions. But Jesus answered him nothing.

2. Jesus, who was willing to reason with Caiaphas, and waste a great prophecy on him; Jesus, who will plead with Pilate, and almost sway him from his sin; Jesus, who will grieve over Judas, and try to melt him with words so gentle that we are in a constant maze because He did not break his heart, yet keeps that dreadful and ominous silence to Herod. Why? Has Jesus forgotten to be gracious? Is He no longer to be moved with compassion? No; the reason is sadder still. The capacity for holiness has been extirpated, the man has become despiritualised.

¶ You know what reprobation is? This is reprobation—'Herod questioned Jesus with many words, but he answered him nothing.' That is reprobation. It is our reprobation begun when God answers us nothing. When, with all our praying, and with all our reading, and with all our inquiring, He still answers us nothing. Herod's day of grace had lasted long, but it is now at an end. Herod had had many opportunities, and at one time he was almost persuaded. At one time he was not very far from the Kingdom of Heaven. But all that is long past. Herod had smothered and silenced his conscience long ago, and now he is to be for ever let alone.[2]

The silence of Jesus towards Herod is an extreme and dramatic warning to us all not to trifle with serious things, not to suppress,

[1] R. Browning, *Pippa Passes.*

[1] J. A. Hutton, *There They Crucified Him*, 106.
[2] Alexander Whyte.

or distort, or delay the private appeals and suggestions from the Holy Spirit which come, as they already have come, to us all in various ways. For it is by a secret process of disloyalty to the better moments of our life, by disobedience to some detail of conscience which for a moment has stood out prominently; it is by covering up dishonourably the wounds which God makes in our souls, and not following up our own uneasiness until it takes us to the feet of Christ to recover there our self-respect—it is because of these things, by turning the edge of God's own instruments, that we harden our hearts, and lose that sensitiveness which makes possible any intercourse between us and Him who is able to save us.

Some dispositions are closed against Christ for ever; some hearts are hardened: not those of the worst men as they seem to us, but of the cold and the calculating, and the hypocritical, and the selfish, and the sensual; of the man who has no lofty aspirations for himself or others; of the man who, simply beginning and ending life in himself, goes remorselessly on his own career, trampling down all who stand in his way. There is no teachableness in such a man as that, and even Jesus can answer him nothing.

The Silence of Jesus

Luke xxiii. 9.—'He answered him nothing.'
Is. liii. 7.—'As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.'

'NOWHERE is the silence of Jesus more impressive and significant than in the terrible passage of events between His arrest in Gethsemane and His being led forth to Calvary. Jesus knew how to suffer. He was infinitely able to endure. Through those hours, crosswoven with hate and spite and jealousy, enmeshed with the most sordid and ignoble and bitter passions of human life, Jesus passed keeping His dignity unscathed. Nothing availed to smirch the whiteness of the robe of life He wore. Nothing obscured, even for a moment, one of the things that went to make Him the most strong and gracious figure in all the world. Not once was He embroiled in the strife that went on all about Him. Not once do we lose sight of Him, alone and matchless, amid the rabble of imprecations, lies, and injustices.

And not least among the things that make this so was the silence Jesus kept. There is one thing that belongs to every hour of that silence, whether before the Sanhedrin or before Pilate or before Herod, and that is ineffable patience. It was more than simple endurance. It was more than complete acceptance of the inevitable. It was so strong and deliberate and self-determined. Jesus was the perfect captain of His soul. Had He not spoken a single word, had He refused to answer a single question, His silence had taught us, maybe, how much can be endured. But He did speak, and so His silence, when He chose to keep it, teaches us a great deal more. It reveals to us the quality and the place and the use of endurance amid life's most dreadful and bitter things. Jesus was never stung into saying anything. He made no mere retaliation, no sharp retort. Nothing was wrung from Him. He spoke out of the quiet of infinite patience, out of the light of an unclouded counsel, out of the leisure of unhurried decision. He could not have spoken as He did had He not been able to keep the silence He did keep.

That silence speaks to us of more than mortal wisdom and love. It is the guerdon of a Divinity we can only trust and worship. But it is also in some sense a guide to us for our own lives in a world where every man is called, soon or late, to live through some hour darkened for him by this world's unjust counsels and cruel purposes, and where never a day passes that does not bring to our ears some murmur from the forsworn and impenitent hosts of sin. Our answers are so feeble because our silences are so unworthy and so few. Jesus did not condescend to reply to the perjured hirelings, or to them that had hired them, concerning the lying charges; but He did not hesitate to speak the words, to make the admissions and the claims, that sealed His doom. For us so often silence is a coward's shelter, and speech a cunning or a passionate self-defence. We need the love and courage and vision and steadfastness of purpose that can help us to make each silence and utterance of life not something from which we hope to gather a selfish gain, but rather something for which we are ready to pay the just price. We may at least learn from the silent Christ that there are falsehoods

too false to be worth a denial, and charges too obviously vindictive and baseless to be worth refuting. There is a battle that is won with a sheathed sword. There is an argument of purity that words cannot strengthen. There is a debt of silence that in the name of his manhood, his spiritual dignity, and his pity, a man sometimes owes to his own soul.

If we look at those occasions when Jesus was silent and at the questions which He refused to answer, we shall discover principles that will be an encouragement and warning to ourselves.

1. *Jesus has no answer for those who prejudge Him.*—Caiaphas already knew what he was going to do with Jesus. There was no room in his mental outlook for such a prophet with such a view of God. When Christ looked at Him, He was looking at a shut gate, locked and barred. In any question which Caiaphas might ask there was no real desire for information or enlightenment. Jesus had been 'judged' already, judged before He appeared at the bar: and His judge was now only angling around for a decent pretext of getting Him condemned before Pilate. This 'trial' before Caiaphas was a mockery of the name.

John the Baptist once judged Jesus hardly. From behind his prison bars he wondered if this type of preacher could possibly be the Messiah. Jesus answered the disciples of the Baptist in gracious ways,—'Go and tell John.' Caiaphas judged Jesus. Jesus was silent. Why? . . . He will not answer those who condemn Him before He is heard.

2. *Jesus has no answer for a 'poseur.'*—Herod, that pseudo-Greek with his affected Hellenism, would like now to see Jesus and ask Him some questions. But affectation of life or belief is at the opposite pole from the natural ways and mind of Jesus. He Himself was so perfectly sincere and real and earnest. He preached truth, and *was* truth. And, if you will notice, the one thing that roused His anger was pretension and sham. He never had anything to say to affectation and unreality. He lashed the Pharisees, not because they were sinners, but because they were hypocrites. One day a disciple came to Jesus and said: 'Master, there are Greeks at the edge of the crowd who would like to speak with you.' We read that Jesus was deeply moved and praised God! But when Herod questioned Him in many ways, He was silent! Why? . . . We can never see God through a mask.

¶ General Booth was always practical and detested cant. If anybody prayed too long in a meeting, the General would cut him short with a loud 'Amen.' After a particular prayer-meeting, memorable for its marvellous influence on many souls, the General sprang up and said; 'We've been in heaven; now for work.' But cant moved him to fierce anger, even the very semblance of it. A missionary came to him once in those early days and offered his services. The General inquired about his means of existence, and the man replied that he trusted in the Lord. 'Do you trust me, though?' demanded the General; 'come now, speak out; what do you want?' He was a wonderful, very nearly an infallible, judge of character.[1]

3. *Jesus has no answer for a dishonest doubter.*—'Whence comest thou?' said Pilate. The Roman had been told that this prisoner claimed to be the Son of God, the Messiah, a King. But Pilate, amid his broken and discredited gods, was a cynical sceptic. He regarded the 'religious Jews' with a sneer. We know that he had no place in his thinking either for a life with God here or for a life with God hereafter. Indeed, when they spoke of the 'sons of the gods' at Rome, it was generally with a sneer or a snigger.

¶ In *Les Misérables* there is a character of whom Victor Hugo says, 'He was a man who took good care not to believe anything.'

¶ A young Divinity student, 'doubting at every pore,' and probably rather proud of the achievement, called upon the Professor. He unfolded the long tale of his difficulties. The Professor must have detected something unreal or affected about his visitor, for he sat in silence. The young doubter came at last to the end of his recital and rose to go. Davidson had no objection, and saw him to the door. There the young man looked up at the sky, and said, 'It's a lovely evening.' 'Oh,' said Davidson incisively, with some trace of astonishment, 'are you sure of *that*?'[2]

When the woman at the well spoke to Him about the Messiah, Jesus answered simply, 'I

[1] H. Begbie, *Life of William Booth*, i. 348.
[2] James Strahan, *Andrew Bruce Davidson*, 158.

that speak unto thee am he.' She had practically asked Him Pilate's question, 'Whence comest thou?' With a magnificent respect for her groping mind, He answered her beyond her asking.

'Whence comest thou?' asked Pilate. Jesus was silent. Why? . . . He deals with doubt, but not with dishonest doubt.

4. *Jesus has no answer for a man in love with his sin.*—Herod had imprisoned John because of the prophet's just reproof of his wickedness. He hated and feared the preacher who exposed his evil. At this moment, unabashed, he was living in open shame. He had flaunted his gross conduct in the eyes of a scandalized generation. But now that he was in Jerusalem, he would gladly see Jesus! Perhaps the Nazarene prophet would do some miraculous turn like a juggler. At least, Herod would question Him and learn His mind.

That woman who was a sinner crept to His feet and washed them with her tears. Jesus gave her the benediction of His forgiveness. Herod, the sinner, asked Him many questions. Jesus looked at him in stony silence. Why? . . . He loves sinners, but not sinners in love with their sin.

Our Lord had refused all dramatic and startling methods at the outset of His ministry. Amid all this fever and passion, He Himself is now the quietest and most restrained person in all Jerusalem, for after Gethsemane the strong, serene composure lasts unbroken to the end. The day of speech is past. It is now the day of action. His words had not won them. Perhaps the Great Act would?

Barabbas or Christ?

Luke xxiii. 18.—'And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.'

1. You have heard a crowd of people cry out all at once. It is always impressive, it is sometimes very terrible, occasionally it is sublime. It begins in a way that no one can explain. Somebody in the crowd utters a name, or ejaculates a brief sentence. What happens? Often nothing at all. Men are not in the mood for it; it drops unnoticed, or provokes a jeer or two and is then forgotten. But sometimes the word falls like a spark on a mass of dry tinder—ten thousand hearts have been prepared for it—swift as a flash of lightning a sympathetic current passes through the whole throng—ten thousand lips take up the cry. They are all carried away by contagion, magnetism, or madness, and a shout goes up enough to rend the sky. When some great and noble sentiment has laid hold of them, the shout of a people is one of the grandest things on earth; when it is some awful prejudice, unreasoning hatred, or cowardly terror that sways them, the shout is the most inhuman and hellish thing on earth; and that was the character of the shout that was raised here.

Why did they do it? Why did they raise their voices for Barabbas? Let us see what we know about the man.

(1) The first significant thing about him is *his name*. He is Bar-abbas, 'the son of the father,' or master. His father was a teacher of the Jewish law, and an expounder of its precepts. He belonged to the religious aristocracy of the Jews. He had been trained in the traditions of Hebrew history, and had been taught that to be a member of the commonwealth of Israel was the proudest privilege a man could enjoy. His childhood and youth had been spent amid the influences of a home whose chief interests were the things of God, whose dominating ambition was the steadfast advancement of His Kingdom. We must think of Barabbas in his youth, with his heart dilating at the story of the glorious past of the people of God, kindling with a passionate indignation at the thought of the subjection of Israel, and eager to share in any movement which will 'restore again the kingdom to Israel.'

(2) The second significant thing which we are told about him is, that he had '*made insurrection*,' or, as Luke more precisely puts it, 'was cast into prison for a certain sedition made in the city.' At the time of the entrance of Barabbas on his manhood Jerusalem was seething with discontent. The whole nation was palpitating with hope, and lifting up its long-shadowed face with expectation that the time of the Deliverer was at hand. Hope deferred had made the heart sick, but the spirit of the unconquerable Hebrew could not be broken, and in the Holy City itself, and especially under the walls of the Temple, insurrection was continually being plotted, and sedition hatched. There was a fierce and defiant Home

Rule party in Judæa, whose unresting aim was to drive the Roman garrison from the Holy Land. Their chosen name was that of Zealots, because of their unquenchable zeal for the restoration of the Jewish Dominion. Among their number was found young Barabbas, the son of the Master in Israel, eager to roll away the reproach of his people, hating the Roman rule with an implacable hatred, willing to do and dare anything, if only a Jewish king shall reign again in Jerusalem.

(3) The third significant thing we are told of him is, that he was *a robber*, and had committed murder in the insurrection. Insurrection was a dangerous trade in any part of the Roman Empire. It was ruthlessly and remorselessly stamped out by the iron heel of Rome. The man who took part in it carried his life in his hand. He had to creep through the lanes of the city, or to play the bold part of outlaw. The wild and turbulent life he was compelled to live told upon his character. The generous impulses, and the high aims with which the young patriot began, faded away; the crude and undevout religious feeling died within him. As the man was hunted by the Roman soldiery, he hardened and became cruel and brutal. As with outlaws in every country, robbery became a custom, and murder only an incident of life. So Barabbas suffered deterioration. To the last he was no common thief or cut-purse, but a man who had chosen to intrigue and plot, and to take the sword against the Government of Rome. But from the first he had hated Rome more than he had feared God; he had more of the proud ambition of the partizan than the lowly spirit of holy waiting for God, and at length his defiant and regardless deeds made him a mark for a keen-eyed and long-armed Government. He was cast into prison, whence he expected to come only to die the traitor's death on the cross.

(4) The fourth and only other thing we are told is that, by both the priests and the people, he was *preferred to Jesus*. It is not difficult to understand that choice. Here was a man who belonged to their city. Here was a man who had adventured his life for Jewish independence. Here was a man who had dared to raise revolt under the shadow of the Prætorium. And although his years had been given to robbery, and his hands were stained with blood, yet, in the moral blindness which had fallen upon the people, and amid the heat of passion which the priests had roused in them, he was just the man to be hailed as a popular hero. Compared with Jesus, crowned with thorns, with the marks of His scourging fresh upon Him, standing bound before them, meek, unresisting, silent, this brilliant, daring, fierce-souled young brigand is in their heated imagination a captivating contrast. The name that leaps to their lips when Pilate offers to release a prisoner to them is that of this daring outlaw. 'Not this Man, but Barabbas.' And Barabbas passed out, bewildered, elated, in the pride of an unexpected success. Jesus passed out to His cross.

2. 'History repeats itself'; and the blunder which that crowd made in Jerusalem when it refused the true Deliverer to choose a false one is a blunder that is being committed to-day by many ardent hearts in Europe. The choice which was laid that Friday before Israel practically lies to-day before our modern world. If ever any age has believed in a better social condition that is bound to come, or has been impatient to attain it, it is the age we live in. But what grieves so many Christians to the quick is that men's ideal is still so far from the Divine one, and their methods for reaching it so unlike those of Jesus Christ.

(1) *The Two Ideals.*—The end toward which Jesus worked was quite different from that of the insurgents and malcontents and would-be Christs of His time. It was a brotherhood of individuals turned from their sin, and so new-made in a religious sense; obedient each of them in his own conscience to the supreme law of holiness, and therefore constituting in the aggregate a spiritual Kingdom of God. It is just as certain that this is not what the most advanced secular reformers of our own day are driving at. They too desire a regenerated society. They too cry after a brotherhood of men. But it is not within each man's soul and conscience that their movement takes its rise. The social changes which they expect are not at all to be conditioned by individual holiness; and the ideal kingdom after which they are in pursuit will not prove to be, when it comes, a Kingdom of God. An ideal does unquestionably shine before the eyes of enthusiasts in plenty; and that speaks well for the moral earnestness of our time. Only the ideal is of a republic of men, not of a Kingdom of God; a

social commonwealth from which injustice is to be expelled, and poverty, and excess, and discontent, and every form of human evil, while yet it furnishes no method at all for banishing any one of these evils from the bosom of a single human being! It is a vain dream to suppose that society can be better than the elements which compose it, or that a kingdom of saints can be realized when you have made no man a saint to be its subject, and set up over it no Lord of saints to be its King.

(2) *The Two Methods.*—Such difference as there is in the ends pursued by Jesus and Barabbas respectively, such is there likewise in their methods. The method of Barabbas was simple enough—insurrection, robbery, and murder. But crime is not a remedy against wrong. At best it can only substitute one evil for another. No millennium can be built upon injustice, or even upon force. Appeals addressed to the private interests or to the unbridled desires of unregenerate human nature do nothing to regenerate that nature itself. If you would reach Christ's goal, you must follow Christ's method. Bring men one by one to submit to the law of God, which is a law of righteousness and of love. Make them alike the children of a heavenly Father. Do this by spiritual forces: by righteousness, that is, and by love. Be yourself a pattern, as Jesus was, of loyalty to principle that can die, but cannot sin against God; of disinterested devotion to the cause of others that will give its own life, not take the life of any. Barabbas robbed; Jesus toiled to serve and give. Barabbas was a murderer; Jesus laid down His life. Pride of self-assertion was the key to the one character—pride that revolts against authority, Divine as well as human, does evil that good may come, and wars against wrong in its own naked strength, as the wild beasts do—tooth and claw. Lowly love is the key to the other—love that respects before all things the law of God and the rights of man, is first just, then pitiful, and counts not its own life dear unto it, that it may save from death the children of the needy.

¶ I am ready to admit that after contemplating the world and human nature for nearly sixty years, I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will if He had undertaken the work of a modern practical statesman.[1]

[1] G. B. Shaw.

Not in soft speech is told the earthly story,
Love of all Loves! that showed Thee for an hour;
Shame was Thy Kingdom, and reproach Thy glory,
Death Thine eternity, the Cross Thy power.

Do we Christians believe that; and are we ready to apply that belief in life and affairs? Can we, as we face the choice, turn ourselves towards the Christ and with outstretched arms which compass all humanity say from the heart those words of the old Coptic Liturgy:

For indeed Thou art the Life of us all;
And the Salvation of us all;
And the Hope of us all;
And the Healing of us all!

Public Opinion

Luke xxiii. 23.—'And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.'

1. It is perfectly true that, in the last resort, Jesus was put to death by public acclamation. At the very end, Pilate left the decision to the mob of people who were surging and clamouring about him, and they cried out, 'Crucify Him.' It was the common people, it was the crowd of anonymous persons, who put the human fate of Jesus beyond all dispute. And yet, although that is so, and although no considerations can clear them of their guilt, Christians in all ages have done well not to place the chief responsibility for the tragedy on Calvary upon the common people, but to fix it upon those men who, by virtue of their power, of their prestige, of their traditional authority and influence, and by the abuse of all these, had so wrought upon the ignorance and upon the prejudices and ambitions of the common people that they were ready to do anything: and they did this thing. The religious mind, the general moral sense of mankind, has been well guided to go behind those ignorant yelling people for the true perpetrators of the judicial murder of Jesus; and has fixed the blame upon Judas, and Caiaphas, and Herod, and Pilate, and the *leaders* of public opinion. It is true that at the very end they seemed to retire a little into the background; but this rather adds to their

criminality and disgrace. They had lit the fuse which had fired the magazine, and they simply slunk into corners to escape the inevitable danger.

Now, perhaps, under God we are there meant to take heed to ourselves. There are things for which we may, in God's sight, and in view of our own bad conscience, be responsible, even when we can make out a case for ourselves—that really we did not directly do the very thing. We may ourselves have so spoken unguardedly, or let loose a rumour, or have kept silence when we ought to have spoken, that some evil thing has been set agoing, and we are responsible for it, even although we may be shocked at the magnitude it has reached, and are distressed at the consequences. Most of the evils of this world have come into being, not by the direct intention of any one in particular, but in every case through the co-operation of all of us giving them a push by some word or by some silence, for which we are responsible; and though at the time it may have seemed a small thing, the word we spoke, or the word we failed to speak, yet in so far as our act could have restrained or diverted or qualified the order of events, we are as responsible for it as though we had with our own hand done the deed.

2. It is not enough to recall the deplorable change in the attitude of the Jerusalem mob from the 'Hosanna!' to the 'Crucify Him!'—it is not enough to quote that as an illustration of the fickleness and ingratitude of the public, and simply to use it as an argument against democracies, or as a reason for ourselves taking no part in public affairs. If we take an interest in public affairs merely for the sake of popular approval, then it is a good thing for us to come upon trouble. Whereas, if we set ourselves to do good, for God's sake and because it is right, we shall have our private reward with God, whether the public approve or condemn. But before we malign public opinion on the authority of this classical illustration, it would be well to pause for a moment, and ask ourselves how it came to pass that crowds who could cry 'Hosanna!' on Palm Sunday, could cry 'Crucify Him!' on Good Friday.

On the Sunday (to use our own terms) before the Crucifixion, a crowd went out of Jerusalem to meet Jesus coming in from Bethany. Probably we shall not be far wrong if we suppose that it was not greatly unlike a similar crowd of people in our own day. They were not—or were not exclusively—inhabitants of Jerusalem. They were people from far and near who had come up to the Feast. Idle, ignorant, simple, ready to take up an idea without weighing it, they flocked to the gates of Jerusalem towards Bethany to meet this Jesus about whom a wonderful rumour had begun to circulate. It was declared that He had raised a man from the dead. The people were excited and happy. They were already prepared to hail Jesus as their Deliverer from the hated Roman yoke. They stripped themselves of their clothes and threw them on the ground for the ass to tread on which bore their Hero. And, though Jesus gave no encouragement to their infatuation, still, we may well believe, His natural dignity, His fine restraint and self-possession, would seem to the people the corroboration of their hope. The enemies of Jesus, the few powerful ones who kept an eye upon all popular movements, observed these things and became uneasy.

Then followed the scene in the Temple, when Jesus threw out the tables of the money-changers, and described the priests as having made a den of thieves of the house of prayer. It was a picturesque phrase, simple, profound, final—and the mob took it up and rolled it like a morsel under their tongues. Whereupon the enemies of Jesus became the more alarmed. It was the last thing in the world they desired—that the popular tumult should turn against them. Just here, they bethought themselves of what proved to be a master-stroke. They drew near to Jesus and, assuming a tone of innocence and inquiry, asked Him whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. We know what Christ's answer was: 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's.' It was an answer from which at first the leaders expected no relief. But as it turned out, it altogether answered their purpose. The mob was in no mood to think or to ponder. All that their mind took in was that Jesus by His answer had seemed to say something in defence of things as they were. They simply heard Him say that Cæsar had some kind of right; and that was enough for them. He was on the other side. They were done with Him. Their countenances changed. Another kind of passion appeared in them.

We are often more angry with ourselves for our mistakes than for our sins. The mob was angry with itself for having gone so far; and so they were ready, in order to recover their self-respect, to go even further the other way. Therefore, when they saw Jesus next day taken about from prison and from judgment, when they saw Him smitten on the face, spat upon, forsaken, and remembered that so recently they had waved branches in procession for Him, hailing Him as their leader, their chagrin, and anger, and vanity so combined and churned up the black fluid of their hearts that they would tolerate no limit, no restraint or qualification, upon their revenge. 'Let Him be crucified.'

3. Public opinion! We almost quail in viewing it in the light of the Cross. It is the greatest force in the world. It is, upon the whole, the most beneficent; but it has its limits, and we are bound to face them. Public opinion may be entirely wrong, or may be very seriously at fault. For public opinion is not even the average opinion of all who go to form the public. It is liable to moods, to fashions. And these moods may be secured or manufactured by people with interests, or with prejudices which, if the masses of the people understood their bearing, would deprive them of all influence.

¶ The Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ gave to public opinion new possibilities, because it stated, in a way that henceforth could never be forgotten in the history of mankind, the folly and the wrongfulness of public opinion which did not rest upon principle. The whole world was combined against one man, and dragged Him to the Cross; but we know that the whole world was wrong, and that one man was right. Because we have that knowledge, we have a sense of the power of the individual to reach to justice; we have a sense of duty not to be overborne by the opinions of others, which gives us a strength that never was known before, and which gives a fibre and a force to the elements of public opinion nowadays which was not known in olden times.[1]

It is the function of all good people to exercise such an influence upon their immediate circle, and so to champion goodness and justice, wherever these are threatened, that there shall ever be working like leaven in meal, like salt amongst things liable to corruption, a resilient, insistent, compact body of right sentiment, which shall keep our own nation true to its own best history.

[1] Mandell Creighton.

CROSS-BEARING

Luke xxiii. 26.—'And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.'

It was a strange and fateful meeting. Simon, a devout Jew of the Dispersion, had crossed the sea from North Africa to worship the God of his fathers in Jerusalem. Finding the city full to overflowing he had obtained a lodging in some neighbouring village. Now in the morning he was on his way to the Temple, his heart beating high with holy hopes. The dream of a lifetime was about to be fulfilled. He would appear before God in Zion, and standing there in the courts of the Lord's house he would feel the Divine presence and taste of the joy of salvation as he had never yet done. But as he entered the gate his pious dream was rudely broken. He found his way suddenly barred by an oncoming rabble, following a criminal to the place of execution. It was the Son of God, cast out of the Holy City and bearing His cross to Calvary. He was utterly spent, and as He came to the spot where Simon stood it was evident even to the callous Roman soldiery that He could do no more. So they laid hands on Simon, the nearest available man, and 'on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.' It was a gross outrage, but Simon knew full well that it was death to resist the Romans. And so, instead of joining the praises in the Temple, he found himself, dumb with smothered indignation, a public spectacle of shame on the way to Calvary.

Now this is recorded, not simply because it was a picturesque incident in the day of the

Cross, but because the Evangelists saw in it a striking parable of Christian discipleship. What passed between Jesus and Simon we do not know, but it would not have been like our Lord to leave such a service unrewarded, and from the fact that Simon's two sons, Alexander and Rufus, were well-known figures in the Christian Church we may infer with practical certainty that Simon himself became a true disciple. Now Jesus had said, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me,' and here was Simon giving, as it were, a dramatic representation of that great word. He was the very first to take up the cross and bear it after Jesus, and you may be sure the chiefest of the Apostles in after years envied him the shame and glory that were his that day. Only the previous night Simon Peter had sworn a great oath saying, 'Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee,' but it was left to another Simon, the man from Cyrene, to take up the cross and bear it after Jesus.

So then the Evangelists have set his figure on the sacred page because it carries a lesson to all time. It is as though they would say to each of us, 'Look at yonder man following close in the Saviour's footsteps, bearing the cross after Jesus. That is the path we all must tread if we would win the crown.' It vitally concerns us, therefore, to ponder well, and face in all seriousness the question of Cross-bearing.

I

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

No word in human language has been more glorified, yet none has been so trifled with and grossly misunderstood. We are accustomed to speak of the petty trials and trivial vexations of life as crosses, or it may be that, feeling the crushing weight of some special trouble, we say of it, 'This is my cross.' Now, doubtless, to endure the trials of life, great and small, in a Christlike spirit is an important element in discipleship, but the cross, as understood by our Lord and His disciples, is essentially a different thing. Had you spoken to St Paul of your 'crosses,' he would have entirely failed to take your meaning. According to his way of thinking, no man could possibly bear more than one cross. Throughout the New Testament the word is never once used in the plural, and it is a grave loss that our idiom has caused the New Testament meaning of the word to be obscured.

What is that meaning? We all know something of the grim reality of crucifixion. It was the most cruel and shameful death, reserved by Roman usage for slaves and desperate criminals. The man who was thus condemned was made a public spectacle, being compelled to bear his cross upon his shoulder to the place of execution. By this mark of ignominy he was branded as an outcast, as one judged no longer fit to live. And Jesus said that not only He but all who would truly follow Him must, in their opposition to the world spirit, be ready to be brought to this.

It has been suggested that our Lord's great command to take up the cross is an anachronism, that the phrase could not have been used before the Crucifixion, and is doubtless a pious Christian afterthought, which the Evangelists have put into the lips of Jesus. George Macdonald, with more imagination, remarks, 'I have wondered whether the word of the Lord, "take up his cross," was a phrase in use at the time. . . . I can hardly believe this form of execution such a common thing that the figure of bearing the cross had come into ordinary speech.'[1] Perhaps not, but there was sufficient material in contemporary Jewish history to suggest the idea to a thoughtful mind. Let it be remembered that Jesus and His disciples would be entering their teens, the most impressionable period of their boyhood, when Judas of Galilee made his insurrection in the days of the taxing (Acts v. 37). It was a patriotic movement from which, as Josephus tells us, arose the sect of the Zealots, one of whom was numbered among the Twelve. In quelling the insurrection the Romans crucified two thousand men. All Palestine is but the size of Wales or two Scottish counties, so it is obvious that every boy must have seen and heard and thought much about these grim doings, and come to know something of the cross as the brand of shame which might become, when borne on a patriot's shoulder, a thing of glory.

What did the boy Jesus think of it all? One may venture to imagine that He may have

[1] *Unspoken Sermons*, ii. 221.

watched some one of the two thousand, perhaps some man of Nazareth, some vigorous daring fellow, led out to die, and the thought of the cross may then have begun to germinate in His mind. What more natural than to reflect, 'There goes a man who set himself in opposition to the world-power and brought this upon himself. He refused to bend, and so he must be broken on the cross. Is this the fate in store for one who in loyalty to God must refuse allegiance to the spirit of the world'? However that may be, this at least we know—that by some means Jesus reached the conviction that He must bear the cross, and so must His disciples. He could not make terms with the world but was impelled, in love to God and man, utterly to renounce and oppose its spirit, and the world retaliated by sending Him to Calvary.

To take up the cross, then, means to take sides with Christ, to stand with Him at all hazards, to oppose the world-spirit even to the death. The cross is the awful symbol of what the world may do to prevent a man from following Christ, and it signifies all the pain and shame and loss that may be involved. A man might well be daunted at the prospect before him when he began to count the cost of discipleship, so our Lord calls for supreme heroism and absolute self-abandonment. He says, in effect, 'At the worst it means crucifixion. Make your account with that. Take your cross with you and you will be ready for the worst that may befall.'

The Apostle Paul is the great interpreter, as he is also the classical example, of cross-bearing. So long as he went with the world he enjoyed by its favour great popularity and renown. But the day came when he turned his back upon it all, denied himself, took up his cross and followed Christ. Henceforth he was an outcast like his Master, reviled and persecuted, pursued by the world's hatred even unto death. All this he understood and gloried in as his share in the sufferings of Christ, the price of his discipleship, in a word, his cross. Many other of the followers of Christ have found, like Paul, that their discipleship meant literal martyrdom, but the essence of the matter is this preparedness of heart to follow Christ at whatever cost.

'We are wont to speak of trouble of any kind as a cross, and doubtless any kind of trouble may be bravely borne in the name of Christ. But, properly speaking, the cross of Christ is what is borne in the act of confessing Him or for the sake of His work. When anyone makes a stand for principle because he is a Christian, and takes the consequences in the shape of scorn or loss, this is the cross of Christ.'[1] Charles Simeon of Cambridge tells how he bore the cross. 'One day, when I was an object of much contempt and derision in the University, I strolled forth, buffeted and afflicted, taking my little Greek Testament in my hand. I prayed that God would comfort me with some cordial from His Word; and opening it, the first text which caught my eye was this: *They found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name*; *him they compelled to bear His cross*. Simon, you know, is the same name as Simeon. It was the very word I needed. What a privilege—to have the cross laid on me to bear it with Jesus! It was enough! I could leap and sing for joy! "Lay it on me, Lord!" I cried, and henceforth I bound persecution as a wreath of glory round my brow.'[2]

II

THE NECESSITY OF THE CROSS

Our Lord leaves us no room to doubt that every true follower of His must be a cross-bearer, must by a definite act of faith take up the cross and steadfastly bear it after Him. This is an aspect of truth which we are apt to overlook, while we regard the cross exclusively as the ground of an objective atonement. Believing that Jesus bore the cross for us, we are slower to apprehend the fact that we must bear the cross after Him. Referring to our Lord's command to take up the cross Ruskin says, 'The idea of these words has been *exactly* reversed by modern Protestantism, which sees in the cross, not a furca to which it is to be nailed, but a raft on which it and all its valuable properties are to be floated into Paradise.'[3]

There is doubtless much in Christian conduct to justify the severity of this criticism. Our natural inclination is to shirk and evade the cross. We would fain follow some pleasanter

[1] J. Stalker, *The Trial and Death of Jesus Christ*, 132.
[2] F. W. Boreham, *A Casket of Cameos*, 249.
[3] *The Bible of Amiens*, iii. § 43.

path. And especially in these days, when love and the joy of life are the favourite themes of the preacher, there is a danger lest the more stern words of the Gospel should be slurred over and forgotten. Why should we not follow our natural bent and enjoy life to the full in all innocent and lawful ways? Why does the Saviour set this repulsive cross so squarely in our path, and insist so peremptorily that we must lay its grievous weight upon our shoulders, else we are none of His?

The answer to all this is that the spirit of the world, the spirit native to every human heart, is profoundly at enmity with God, and is to be renounced, opposed and cast out. 'Asceticism,' says William James, 'must, I believe, be acknowledged to go with the profounder way of handling the gift of existence. Naturalistic optimism is mere syllabub and flattery and sponge-cake in comparison.'[1] And he thus defines asceticism. 'It symbolizes, lamely enough no doubt, but sincerely, the belief that there is an element of real wrongness in this world, which is neither to be ignored nor evaded, but which must be squarely met and overcome by an appeal to the soul's heroic resources, and neutralized and cleansed away by suffering.'[2]

That there is 'a real wrongness in this world' Calvary is the supreme and standing evidence. For the moral condition of the ancient world we do not need to read Juvenal's *Satires* or the first chapter of Romans; it is enough to ponder its treatment of Jesus. He came as the light of the world, but men loved darkness rather than light; He came in love and gentleness, but He was hated and reviled and spit upon; He came that they might have life, but they hounded Him to death. Such was the spirit of the world that there was no room in it for God's own Son. Here is revealed an antagonism so profound that no man of moral feeling and insight can fail to be sensible of it. 'Know ye not,' exclaims the Apostle, as of something which everyone must be well aware of, 'that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God' (Ja. iv. 4).

And what of the spirit of the world to-day? Can it be denied that there is 'a real wrongness in this world' in which we find ourselves? Does it not force itself upon our attention from every quarter? Are not its manifestations such as to give rise to great and growing alarm? Turn to any field of industrial or social life, of politics national and international, and you find evidences of an ugly and hateful spirit which would, if it could prevail, tear civilization to pieces. Upon one point all good and thoughtful men are agreed—that the spirit of the world to-day must be radically changed if the world is to be saved.

It is to save us from this spirit and to save this sinful world from itself that Christ came; but He can in nowise save us unless we are ready to take His way and do battle in His name for our own deliverance. We must face the world in His spirit, combining resolute opposition with unconquerable love. It is the only way. 'Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.' 'Not merely is the cross the gateway of the Christian life; it is its signature and distinctive mark ever after. Vicarious atonement by no means implies that we never have anything to bear. Many people think it does, thereby bringing grave discredit on the Gospel; but it is a mistake born of simple ignorance, for no one can help noticing, and feeling the significance of, the fact that in the New Testament practically all the allusions to Jesus as our Pattern are given in direct connection with His passion. *Because* He suffered, therefore we suffer with Him.'[1] This was what St Paul so clearly understood, and so fully and impressively expounds in all his Epistles. It was impossible for him to imagine that he would travel through life by some easier path than that which his Master had trodden. Christ Himself was made perfect through the things that He suffered; surely the servant cannot be greater than his Lord, surely the sorrows of the Master must be shared by all His followers. Every one who will take up this service must be ready, by the terms of the service, to travel along the way of the cross, to drink of the cup his Master drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with.

It is not well that I should move
  Forever in Life's easy street.
How should my feet not bleed for Love?
  Love's bled for me. And Love is sweet.

[1] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 364.
[2] *Op. cit.*, 362.

[1] H. R. Mackintosh, *Life on God's Plan*, 253.

I follow though the brambles tear,
And though the mountain track is rough.
How should I moan a cross to bear?
Christ went this way. It is enough.[1]

III

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

'We are slow to believe,' writes Dr Hort,[2] 'that the Cross of anguish can be a Tree of Life.' Yet so it is. The cross is the great instrument of reconciliation and redemption. Witness the power of Christ's own cross. It might have seemed to natural judgment that, having opposed the world till it condemned and cast Him out, He had thereby lost all influence over it. Men surely said, as they saw Him bearing His cross to Calvary, 'This is the end of Him and of His work.' But Jesus said, 'No, it is not the end. I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' By His death He has won an empire in the hearts of men, and His cross of anguish has become a 'Tree of Life.' And, wheresoever that spirit is manifested in the world, it has the same strange power.

Would you win all the world for Christ?—
One way there is and only one;—
You must live Christ from day to day,
And see His will be done.

No easy way,—rough-strewn with stones,
And wearisome, the path He trod.
But His way is the only way
That leads man back to God.[3]

When the charge was made against the Salvation Army that its extravagances brought contempt upon religion, the General's daughter replied, 'It is a mistake. That which is the laughing-stock of the world and of hell is a religion without sacrifice.'[4] There can be no question of the truth of that. Religion without sacrifice is as salt which has lost its savour. It is by whole-hearted devotion and utter sacrifice that men's souls are moved; it is by the cross that the world is to be won.

'Find me the man,' exclaimed General Gordon, 'and I will take him as my help, who utterly despises money, name, honour, and glory; one who never wishes to see his home again, one who looks to God as the source of good and controller of evil; one who has a healthy body and energetic spirit, and one who looks on death as a release from misery.'[1] And James Chalmers, himself a notable example of that spirit, calls for such men to bear the knowledge of Christ to the far-off places of the earth. Many have responded and, by what they suffered more than by what they did, have impressed the world. Listen to one of them. 'I go gladly on this mission,' said James Telford, 'and shall rejoice if I may but give my body as one of the stones to pave the road into interior Africa, and my blood to cement the stones together, so that others may pass into Congoland.'[2]

Such is the spirit of the cross-bearer. From which it would appear that cross-bearing is no melancholy, peevish business, no sad message only for the sick room and the house of mourning, but a grand adventure for strong and heroic souls. 'I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of,' said Mr Steadfast as he crossed the River, 'and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too.'[3] Many humble disciples in all the walks of life have had the same ambition, to walk in the Saviour's footsteps, to take up the cross and bear it after Jesus. These are they who sweeten and subdue the world by love, and by them is the Kingdom of God advanced.

In the Middle Ages the call to take up the cross came to have a special significance. Men believed it to be the will of God that the Holy Land and the Holy Sepulchre should be rescued from the hands of the infidels. Multitudes were swept away by a Divine passion to give their lives to this high enterprise. The fire spread to every village and hamlet, and touched many a dull soul to life. The old chronicler, after telling in some detail how the lord of the manor, and this nobleman and that, took service, proceeds to give the roll of honour of the common men. 'Also took the cross' so-and-so and so-and-so (giving merely the names). All of them names that would never have been remembered, but suddenly they

[1] Norman Gale, *Collected Poems*, 25.
[2] *Hulsean Lectures*, 218.
[3] J. Oxenham, *The Vision Splendid*, 96.
[4] J. Strahan, *The Maréchale*, 129.

[1] R. Lovett, *James Chalmers*, 214.
[2] J. G. Simpson, *Great Ideas of Religion*, 263.
[3] *Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II.

start into brilliance on the page of history. By this alone they are memorable that they left home and country, and hazarded their all at what they believed to be the call of God. With the cross blazoned on their armour they went forth to fight God's battle in their time, as they understood it, and in this holy cause they willingly laid down their lives. Well will it be for us if our names are set down in the Christian roll of honour of our time, if it can be said of us, as of Simon the Cyrenian, 'He also took the cross and bore it after Jesus.'

For only he who bears the cross
May hope to wear the glorious crown.

J. H. Morrison.

Independence in Sorrow

Luke xxiii. 28.—'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me.'

1. St Luke was the Evangelist of the women. He always gives their point of view. He does so from the very outset of the Gospel with the story of the Annunciation. And it is St Luke who tells us about the woman's share at this point. There is no record of any woman having deserted Jesus, or persecuted Him, or ill-treated Him. At this moment before the Crucifixion not one single Apostle had come forward to help Him in His hour of need; it was the women only who followed, weeping and bewailing Him. But Jesus begged them to refrain. Turning to them He said, 'Weep not for me.'

We are sure that even as Christ spoke His eyes were radiant with love and gratitude, but what is the explanation of His words to these daughters of Jerusalem? Certainly it was forbidden for any one publicly to lament the fate of a condemned criminal. Doubtless, also, Christ realized the sorrows of these noble women, and, knowing that even more poignant and personal griefs would soon oppress them, He did not desire that they should shed tears for Him. But is it not possible that the true meaning of Christ's words is that, in the intense and unfathomable suffering through which He was passing, He felt all human sympathy to be unavailing, and realized that His only refuge was in God? In this moment of deep sorrow Christ was able to be independent of human sympathy, because He knew that God was with Him, and, having God, He had all that His heart could need.

Through all His life this firm faith upbore Him, and yielded the deep joy of His heart. For one moment only the purpose of God was clouded. His sense of the presence of God was gone, and the face of God was hidden. That experience comes like a flash of light to show us a depth otherwise hidden from us. It was in that moment when darkness rested on the Cross, when the burden of the guilt of men lay upon Him, and the sense of His own loneliness was complete. Then His confidence in God faltered, and His joy was gone. Then, but only then, women might have wept over Jesus. It is a woman's voice which cries with an interpreting pathos:

Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, 'My God, I am forsaken.'
It went up from the Holy's lips, amid His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation.[1]

But now, in this moment of exhaustion and grief which had come upon Him, He would lean back on God, and find in God once more His refuge and His stay. Realizing that He was not forsaken of the Father, He felt that His mission could not finally fail, that the day would surely dawn when ten thousand times ten thousand would own Him as their King. He was able to view the scene from the standpoint of God, and therefore He could say to these daughters of Jerusalem, 'Weep not for me.'

2. Is it expected of us, Christ's frail and imperfect disciples, that we shall do likewise? The question presses upon us when suffering enters our homes, when the shadow falls across life's path, when Death becomes a familiar visitant, and when we are led out to our Calvary. Is it required of us that in this respect also we follow Christ, remaining strong and independent in the hour of grief? Is Christ our Exemplar

[1] E. B. Browning, *Cowper's Grave*.

here also, or was it because of His unique vocation and His unique relation to God that He was able to dispense with the tears of these sorrowing women? He would indeed be harsh who should rebuke or even disallow any manifestation of grief revealing dependence on human aid, and surely every man who has bent a listening ear to the still sad music of humanity will hasten to soothe and sympathize with those who are overwhelmed by some great calamity; yet we feel that the more our spiritual life is deepened, the closer shall we approximate to the attitude of Christ. The war led countless thousands into the valley of the shadow of death, and it tested us all in many ways. Among the suffering sons of men it distinguished those who had no Comforter from those who knew where the healing balm for their wounds could be found; it separated those who had no Divine Helper from those who in secret were able to sob their tears away on the breast of God. There were men and women —in our hearts we praised them—who in those dark days buried their fondest earthly hopes in the dust, but who nevertheless greeted us with a smile, and proceeded bravely with life's task. They gloriously illustrated the spirit of independence in sorrow so perfectly seen in Christ.

¶ 'What does one end by doing when all the best is taken away from one, when life has grown trivial, stunted, and narrow; when the sun of one's happiness is set?' This is the question put by Lucas Malet's heroine in *The Wages of Sin* to her uncle, and he answers: 'After a time, Polly, not at once—that would be asking too much of poor human nature—but after a time, my dear, one lights a candle called Patience, and guides one's footsteps by that. To the best of my ability I lighted that candle the day your mother told me which of the two brothers who loved her she loved best. It burnt very badly at first, Polly, did my candle—guttered, had thieves in the wick; and meanwhile I stumbled pretty freely. But, by God's grace, it has burnt brighter as time has gone by —burns brightly enough now, as I humbly trust, to light me down the long hill of old age without any very discreditable tumbles. . . . Try to light your candle of Patience, my Polly, in faith; remembering that you are not alone. More than half the noblest men and women you meet carry such candles likewise.'

I know you: solitary griefs,
  Desolate passions, aching hours!
I know you: tremulous beliefs,
  Agonized hopes, and ashen flowers!

The winds are sometimes sad to me,
  The starry spaces full of fear,
Mine is the sorrow on the sea,
  And mine the sigh of spaces drear.

Some players upon plaintive strings,
  Publish their wistfulness abroad—
I have not spoken of these things
  Save to one man, and unto God.

It is to be remembered that Christ's attitude of soul is very far removed from that of the Stoic, who regards the need for sympathy as a childish and unworthy weakness. The ancient Stoic held on with fortitude and indifference under the blows of Fate, and the modern Stoic, after thanking whatever gods may be for his unconquerable soul, announces that, though his head is bloody, it remains unbowed. Even the gentler mood of Stoicism represented in Matthew Arnold's beautiful poem 'Self-Dependence' is very different from the position to which the Christian aspires. If the Christian succeeds in becoming independent of man in time of sorrow, it is only because he has utterly reposed his soul upon God, and is able to experience the blessedness of that complete dependence. Having God, he has all. With St Paul he enters into the fullness of his heritage. 'All things are yours—life or death, things present or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.'

3. For the sake of others, especially, the Christian will desire to attain to this strength and independence in sorrow. It was because Christ needed no help from men that He was able to help so richly those men who were in need. The spirit of self-forgetfulness in these words to the daughters of Jerusalem is the same spirit which appeared later in the deeper darkness of Calvary, when Christ thought of His enemies and prayed that they might be forgiven; when He turned to the penitent thief and said, 'To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise;' and when He looked down tenderly upon His beloved mother at the foot of the Cross, and committed her to the charge

of the disciple who had so recently leaned upon His breast. The world will always stand in need of such self-forgetting sympathy, for so many, failing to seek and find God, or catching but faint and occasional glimpses of His presence amid the pressure of worldly affairs, know not the place of refuge when the sky darkens and the storm breaks upon them. Surely it must be the desire of every Christian heart so to live that, if such distressed souls meet us in life's way, they may find us, like our Master, with a heart at leisure from itself to shelter and uphold.[1]

O strengthen me that, while I stand
Firm on the rock, and strong in Thee,
I may stretch out a loving hand
To wrestlers with the troubled sea.

The Women of Jerusalem

Luke xxiii. 28.—'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.'

It was in the early morning, while the crowded city slept, that Jesus endured His hours of scorn and injustice and unspeakable insult. It was full forenoon, and every Khan had poured forth its pilgrim guests into the narrow streets, when Jesus was led forth to His death. 'A great company of people followed Him,' but no friendly face looked out upon Him. They were now awed and silent, for no man is so brutal and so sunken as not to be solemnized and stilled by the near presence of death. But the stillness, broken only by the irregular tramp of the jostling throng, was suddenly pierced by an outburst of Oriental lamentation. The wailing came from the women, who formed a compact company in the crowd. They were the women of the common people. The wife of scribe or priest would not have been found there. They carried their children in their arms, or led them in their hands, as working folk must do when they go abroad. As the wild cries of these daughters of Jerusalem fell on the ears of Jesus, He stopped, and the whole procession stopped with Him. He turned, and looked towards the women, and in the silence, He rebuked their tears for Him with gentle chiding, and in a still tenderer compassion He made them weep for the destiny He saw already shadowing them and their children.

Now, very plainly that incident has been detailed because it sets in a strong light the relation of Jesus to womanhood. The Evangelist feels that these women are typical of universal womanhood, and that the act and words of Jesus reveal His mind. And so we find three things impressed upon us as we ponder the story. First, the moral and spiritual appeal Jesus makes to womanhood; second, His compassion for womanhood; and third, His message to womanhood. Let us take these in order.

1. *The moral and spiritual appeal Jesus makes to womanhood.*—What did these women see in Jesus? We must not, in sentimental imaginativeness, credit them with the insight of a personal faith and love. These women must not be classed with Mary of Bethany who sat at Jesus' feet, whose insight divined the hour in which to pour her spikenard on His head. They were simple, working women, whose busy lives gave few opportunities. It would be too much to say that they were ready to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. No; but they knew of the strokes of the scourge; they saw the pallor of weakness on His cheek, and the sweat of exhaustion on His brow; they remembered His deeds of mercy, His love and longing for their children, His compassion on their sick; they were wounded in heart for the unjust and merciless wrongs He bore; and now, as He walked in the majesty of His holiness, the contrast between Him and the background of envious and brutal hate entered their hearts with its irresistible appeal. It was the woman's heart which saw past all base charge and accusation, past all scorn and contumely, past all arrogant denial by priest and scribe, into the very secret of Jesus, and made loyal response with its sympathetic tears.

To this day Jesus makes the same moral and spiritual appeal to womanhood. The dear mothers who taught us God before they left us for the silent skies could not have entered the lists of debate with a militant denier of the miraculous, but they understood the miracle of the virgin life and spiritual grace of Jesus, and they never faltered in their faith in Him as Lord.

¶ 'Ah! Tom, thou hast grown old and infirm,

[1] J. Colville, *The Christian Optimist*, 85.

and things have turned out ill for thee, but from the grave in Ecclefechan kirkyaird yonder comes your mother's voice, saying, "Trust in God and do the right," and this will I do though the heavens fall.' [1]

The devout women who gather in the meetings for prayer have no skilful apologetic, potent in the schools, upon their lips, but they hear the word which is dark to others. The things hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed to them. And those humble women, whose years are an unceasing drudgery, whose hands do daily the deeds of patient service until even the angels wonder, who wist not that their faces shine, whose hearts are meek and lowly amid the pride and strife of time, see Jesus, as priest and scribe never see Him, and feel in their toil and sorrow the consoling power of His moral and spiritual appeal. It is these women who support the Church of Jesus, who find it the sanctuary of their souls, and the sphere of many lovely ministries.

2. *His compassion for womanhood.*—Jesus did not disdain these women's tears. They were a solace in His loneliness and sorrow. But He could not suffer them to misinterpret His mind to the dull-minded mob. He was going to His cross in the high elation of His sinlessness; of His unfaltering faith, of His consecration, and of His spiritual desire for men. 'Weep not for me,' He calls, as He hushes the outburst of wailing. 'Weep for yourselves and for your children.' He sees again the sight He saw when He Himself wept over the city. He sees Jerusalem compassed about with armies, her walls battered into ruins, her Temple burned up with fire, her people fleeing for refuge to the surrounding hills, the city sitting desolate which once sat as a queen. And in the horror of siege and sally, in the sore suffering of hunger and thirst, in the midst of the mad fury of Zealot cruelty and Roman revenge, then, as always, when sin is finished and has brought forth its various deaths, He saw the heaviest and most pitiless stroke falling upon womanhood. It is the mother and her children who shall pass through the hottest furnace.

'Behold the days are coming,' said Jesus to these daughters of Jerusalem. It may be they could as little understand His prophecy as could any of the blind Sadducees who chafed at this interruption in the progress to the Cross. But He spoke through them to all generations, and proclaimed His Divine compassion for womanhood in all days that are to come. When war desolates a land, and the soil is stained with blood, the sharp sword turns its keenest edge upon the woman, and pierces her heart as she sits bereaved of her husband and her sons.

The wind comes seething through great forest trees
Followed by dread and awful silences
Wherein we wait, and watch, and in our hearts
Cry, 'From the storm, O God, deliver us!'
Our country holds her sword upon her knees.
Silent, with eager eyes that watch her face,
Our men stand, all on fire to fight; but we
Women, close by their side must fold our hands,
Nor seek to see, because our eyes are blurred.
And so we hear the stir of gathered hosts.
Followed by dread and awful silences
Wherein we wait, and watch, and in our hearts
Cry, 'From the storm, O God, deliver us!'

When a complex civilization has gathered men and women into its overgrown cities, and compelled its toilers to work in close and dusty factories at unwholesome trades and among poisonous materials, when it has housed them in long lines of mean streets, and set them to eke out existence on a scanty wage, it is the women and children who faint and die under the travail. Who can walk the streets, who can listen to the sad histories of family life, who can witness the stern and losing battle with adverse circumstances, with its haunting fear of miserable poverty; who has ever had revealed to him vexed and disappointed hearts of loving women, who must both work and weep, and not catch the sob in the words of Jesus as He saw these sights down all the centuries, and cries: 'Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.'

Lay this compassion of Jesus for womanhood on your own hearts. Let it give you a fine grace and deference in your speech; let it make you generous in your thoughts of woman in her tempted hours; let it stir you up to wiser and more strenuous efforts to lift her heavy burdens; let it make you abound in the first of all chivalries—a watchful and jealous care for her holy chastity; let it fill you with tender

[1] Carlyle.

and reverent thoughts, until you shall so put on the Lord Jesus Christ that His compassion shall shine through you, and every woman shall feel that your very shadow passing by bestows a blessing on her.

3. *His message to womanhood.*—Jesus had more than this sad prophecy of compassion for these daughters of Jerusalem. He had a message to give to their terrified and trembling hearts. With His unfailing grace He sets it in a familiar proverb, dear as all proverbs are to simple, untutored minds, and so easily remembered, that in the days to come it echoed in their ears: 'For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' It is the last message of Jesus, for with these words He ceased His public ministry, and it is a message to womanhood. The meaning of this short parable cannot be missed. If in these days of this fanatical city's progress to moral death such deeds as these are done in its streets, how much more ruthless and cruel shall be the scenes of horror and of vengeance in the days when that progress shall be completed, when the cup of her iniquity shall be full, when she shall have come to her hopeless corruption. Here merciless unrighteousness has been haling innocence to the cross, but not without protest and not without tears. The tree is still green. But then unrighteousness shall have run its course, and the awful retribution that sweeps away guilty and innocent shall fall upon the city, in which no spark of moral energy shall be left. The tree will be dry—ripe for the fire.

What is the message to womanhood from this solemn parable? It is wrapped up in it, but it was left unspoken. But what that message is we know with certainty. When Jesus wept over the city He set His doom in a companion figure: 'Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.' And then there followed the counsels to watchfulness and to faithfulness in service, and the promises of blessing to those who should do deeds of mercy to His little ones. And so the message here is an appeal for prayerfulness, for loyalty to righteousness, for a large-minded and patient charity. Nothing could save Jerusalem now, but if its women will be loyal to truth and to purity, if they will busy their hands in the holy service of the sick and the poor, they and theirs shall be remembered when the anger of the Lord is kindled against Jerusalem.

That is the ruling note of Christ's message to womanhood. It is given to her to see the vision of the green tree and the dry, and by her devoutness and faith, her unflinching allegiance to holiness, and her loving service in home and hospital, and school and street, to redeem the cities from their sin, and turn the thoughts of men to God.

O woman hearts, that keep the days of old
In living memory, can you stand back
When Christ calls? Shall the heavenly Master lack
The serving love, which is your life's fine gold?

Do you forget the hand which placed the crown
Of happy freedom on the woman's head,
And took her from the dying and the dead
Lifting the wounded soul long trodden down?

Do you forget who bade the morning break,
And snapped the fetters of the iron years?
Your Saviour calls for service. From your fears,
Rise, girt with faith, and work for His dear sake.

Forgiveness

Luke xxiii. 34.—'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'

It is remarkable how little the Evangelists speak of the sufferings of Jesus Christ as bodily sufferings. They do not dwell on the details of His Passion as if great stress was to be laid on the amount of pain He had endured. They take us into a sphere of life much more sacred.

In this first word from the Cross we see that Christ's thoughts are turned away from Himself to His enemies—to the Roman Governor who had given authority to crucify Him; to the Roman soldiers who had stretched Him on the Cross; to the Jewish priests and rulers who were the chief instigators of the crime, and to the fickle multitude who were stirred up by their religious guides. Jesus Christ has no thought of anger, or vengeance, or personal feeling at all.

How hardly man this lesson learns,
To smile, and bless the hand that spurns;

To see the blow, to feel the pain,
And render only love again!
One had it—but He came from heaven,
Reviled, rejected, and betrayed;
No curse He breathed, no plaint He made,
But when in death's dark pang He sighed,
Prayed for His murderers, and died.

This word tells us of the hidden depth of love and compassion in His heart; it tells us of His boundless sympathy with those who are sinners. He knows 'what they do'; but He can, even when He is suffering, look at the act as they look on it. He can see it with their eyes; He can put Himself in their place; He can enter into their thoughts and feelings in such a way as to make Him regard them not with anger, but with pity. In so far as they were acting under blindness and delusion and ignorance, He can enter into their sympathies, and have compassion on their infirmities. Only He ever attained to the judgment which can account for the direst hostility from which one is suffering, and which understands the process whereby others justify themselves in their enmity.

Let us look at three aspects of the subject of forgiveness.

1. *What forgiveness means.*—Forgiveness tends to be restricted in our minds to the poverty-stricken significance of 'releasing from consequences.' It becomes thereby an action indistinguishable from the indulgence of those who have no vivid sense of the wickedness of sin, or are too cowardly to assert their personal rights. By getting into bad companionship in our thoughts, forgiveness becomes identified with what is 'weak.' The grand corrective of this serious error is to get back to the teaching and Person of Jesus. At least the forgiveness Divine can have nothing weak about it, and God—as Jesus interprets Him to us—is essentially and supremely a God of forgiveness. Now the primary meaning of forgiveness cannot be merely the annulling of consequences, for many a sincere soul has prayed for Divine forgiveness, has felt that forgiveness, and yet has had to bear the grievous results of his sin. 'Forgiveness' is a forthgiving of oneself in renewed feelings of friendliness and renewed activity of friendly purpose. It is an attempt to restore soul-union between the wronged and the one who wrongs. This is why we must forgive to feel and know God's forgiveness. He is love, and only by giving place to love in our hearts can we let Him into them. If, then, our communion with Him is to be constant, then our forgiveness of others must be constant too; it cannot and dare not wait upon penitence in others. The precedence of forgiveness over repentance follows inevitably from the Christian revelation of God as a God of constant love and mercy. For the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not a God sometimes merciful, sometimes condemnatory and vindictive. He is always and invariably love. Wrath is only the form His love must take in relation to certain types of obstinacy. Forgiveness, then, means sharing the Divine spirit of loving purpose towards every sinful soul—a purpose which 'does not alter when it alteration finds,' a purpose which does not wait upon repentance, but rather strives to anticipate and awaken it. The sharing of that spirit is a constant obligation upon the Christian disciple. It is not a spirit, therefore, that he can put off because some one has wronged him, or even wronged some one dear to him. The half-truthfulness of the plea that repentance must precede forgiveness arises from the fact that the spirit of Divine love may be greatly thwarted in its purpose. And this consideration brings us right to the heart of the matter. It brings us to the Cross—to the Cross of our Lord, which shows us God suffering down the obduracy of sinful humanity, pleading by blood and anguish with the impenitent souls of men, asserting His forgiving love in face of the jeering contempt of the world, and proving it in uttermost self-sacrifice.

2. *The teaching and example of our Lord about forgiveness.*—The teaching of Jesus upon this matter is extremely illuminating and convincing. Christ's whole idea of God is of a father who meets his prodigal son more than half-way with the offer of forgiveness. The very conception of the gospel, the meaning of the Incarnation, is this, that God seeks men ere ever they seek Him. His attitude to the sinner can never be merely righteous with the righteousness that is purely critical and unredemptive. Righteousness for Jesus could never be divorced from love—a love that understands everything.

The teaching of Jesus, however, is enormously strengthened and vindicated by His example. Let us take the incident of the woman taken

in adultery. Here, if anywhere, surely repentance must precede forgiveness. But we find no suggestion that the woman was penitent: not even after Christ's masterly stroke of deliverance on her behalf. Jesus forgave her freely, and took repentance for granted, showing His magnificent trust in the operation of love, and in the reserves of goodness lying deeper than sin in every human soul.

Then His free forgiveness of those crucifying Him completes the argument from Christ's example. It is for His enemies, utterly impenitent at the moment, that Jesus pleads forgiveness and implicitly gives to them His own. In doing so, He is true to the most fundamental meaning of His sacrifice. The Cross declares an Atonement, purposed and carried through, for every sinning soul, ere ever it is convicted of its sin or in the least repentant.

3. *Why should forgiveness precede repentance?*—The answer surely is found in the words 'For they know not what they do.' In all human sin there is an abundant element of unreason, a failing of the human mind, a misjudgment. This is the only thing that makes it forgivable. It does not express the true man. The man has yet to 'come to himself,' as Jesus said of the prodigal, and when that happens, he will grow ashamed of his temporary sinful self. Many sins are simply the fruit of careless mental living, which leaves the mind a prey to sophistry.

> Evil is wrought from want of thought
> As well as want of heart.

But 'want of thought' is itself sinful. So there is responsibility, but there is the extenuating circumstance of the strain of life upon the mind of man.

Seeing, then, that the mainspring of sin is ignorance of the good, if it is to be overcome the good must live and shine in us. Hate must be fought with love, and cruelty with forgiveness. Not that all the consequences should or can be annulled; the consequences are not merely evil, again and again they are the soul's best source of illumination.

Tennyson's story of King Arthur and Guinevere is a notable commentary upon this truth, especially in the words of the fallen queen:

> It was my duty to have loved the highest:
> It surely was my profit had I known:
> It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
> We needs must love the highest when we see it.

¶ 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' Dr Kelman, in a Foreword to the little book *A Gentleman in Prison*, translated by Caroline Macdonald, gives us the spiritual history of the Japanese criminal—Tokichi Ishii. 'There is in it,' he says, 'something of the hellish nakedness of Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Horror*. There is also the most realistic vision I have ever seen of Jesus Christ finding one of the lost.'

Ishii never had much chance. He was born in heathenism. His father was a drunkard, and he early had to choose between stealing or starving. One crime led to another, until in 1915 he murdered a Geisha girl. Suspicion fell on another man who would have been executed had not Ishii insisted on his own guilt, appealing against his acquittal when found 'Not Guilty.' He knew nothing of Christianity—had, indeed, never met a Christian—but Miss Macdonald, who lived in Tokyo, became much interested, like many others, in this extraordinary criminal. She sent him special food, and later on a New Testament, which for some time he did not look at. But one day he turned over the leaves, and was struck with the passage that tells how Jesus set His face like a flint to go to Jerusalem, which meant death. Some days later he took the book from the shelf again. 'This time'—he writes in that wonderful journal he kept during his imprisonment—'I read how Jesus was handed over to Pilate by His enemies, was tried unjustly and put to death by crucifixion. As I read this I began to think. Even I, hardened criminal that I was, thought it a shame that His enemies should have treated Him in that way. I went on, and my attention was next taken by these words: *And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* I stopped. I was stabbed to the heart as if pierced by a five-inch nail. What did the verse reveal to me? Shall I call it the love of the heart of Christ? Shall I call it His compassion? I do not know what to call it. I only know that, with an unspeakably grateful heart, I believed.' 'The last words that a man utters,' he says, 'come from the depths of his soul; he does not die

with a lie upon his lips. Jesus' last words were: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*; and so I cannot but believe that they reveal His true heart. . . . I have passed through all sorts of experiences and have often been urged to repent of my sins. In spite of this, however, I did *not* repent, but, on the contrary, became more and more hardened. And then, by the power of that one word of Christ's, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*, my unspeakably hardened heart was changed, and I repented of all my crimes. Such power is not in man.'

Sins of Ignorance

Luke xxiii. 34.—'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'

It is natural and right that our minds should notice above all else the love and generosity which these words disclose. For there is nothing which more certainly commands our admiration than any exercise of thought and care for others by one who is himself in great pain. We know how, with us, pain tends to call in attention and concentrate it upon self; and how generally those who suffer much are tempted to consider themselves first of all, and to become self-absorbed and exacting. And here is an instance of intense suffering with gentlest consideration for those who were inflicting the anguish. There is in this an appeal of which all are conscious, and which none can utterly set aside. For we feel the vast contrast of our Lord's absolute unselfishness with our own self-centred anxiety and preoccupation in our personal troubles; of His unwavering, persistent love with our brief ventures of kindliness, soon tired and easily discouraged as they are apt to be.

It is not strange, then, that the triumphant energy of love should first come home to us as we think over the words. But as we fasten our thoughts upon the second clause, and try to see what it involves, we grow conscious of a certain severity and awefulness in it. It has somewhat of the solemnity of a judicial act; and the love that pleads is felt to be indeed His love who shall hereafter come to be our Judge. 'They know not what they do'—it is on that that our Lord, reading the men's hearts, rests His plea for their forgiveness in the midst of their misdoing. There is no sort of indifference to the wrong that is being wrought; no vague merging of moral distinctions in kindness or indulgence; no loose and indiscriminate desire for a general leniency; but an exact weighing of the case, and a discernment and presentation of one ground on which forgiveness may be asked for the offenders—'they know not what they do.'

1. First, then, let us notice this: that our Saviour and our Judge plainly does not hold that all sins done in ignorance lose, on that ground, their sinful character. These men 'know not what they do,' but yet they need forgiveness. There is here no semblance and no allowance of that broad, lax dealing with wrong-doers which treats 'I did not know' as clearing the conscience altogether and ending the whole matter. Ignorance and guilt are not mutually exclusive—they may meet in one act; a man may do wrong ignorantly, and yet thereby incur guilt, and therefore need forgiveness. This our Saviour's words seem clearly to imply; and in implying this they concur with the general tenor of the Bible as to the wrong acts of those who know not what they do. 'If a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity. . . . He hath certainly trespassed against the Lord.' Such is the express and repeated teaching of the Old Covenant. Whatever width of meaning may be assigned to the Hebrew expression which is rendered 'sinning through ignorance,' there can be no doubt that it includes what is directly and plainly meant by those words; and that they who broke God's Law, not knowing what they did, were required to seek His pardon in repentance and with sacrifice. There is one passage in which our Lord plainly says that there are sins of ignorance which, in their demerit and desert, differ from deliberate sins in degree only and not in kind; since 'he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.' Most clearly, again, St Paul judges his own past life on the same principle. When he made havoc of the Church, he did it ignorantly. He may have been, as one has said, 'honest and sincere in doing it, yet he never reflected upon it afterwards but with shame and regret, with a peni-

tential sorrow and remorse for it.' When years of love and service lay between him and all that chapter of his life, still he judged himself 'the least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle,' because he 'persecuted the Church of God.'

Saint, did I say? with your remembered faces,
Dear men and women, whom I sought and slew!
Ah when we mingle in the heavenly places
How will I weep to Stephen and to you![1]

But the moral aspect of ignorance varies greatly according to that which is ignored. There are truths of which no man claiming to be sane has any right to be ignorant. 'You ought to have known,' is a phrase that seemed hard to us as children; but we use it, and could defend it, when we are grown up; we act upon it constantly. Again, there are responsibilities which no man has a right to undertake if he is ignorant of the laws which should guide him in sustaining them. Who, for instance, would think the plea of ignorance a full excuse for a doctor who, because he did not know what as a student he should have learnt, caused his patient's death? Again, the moral import of ignorance varies with its cause; no man is held guiltless because his crime of ignorance was committed in drunkenness. It varies, again, according to the opportunities which a man has had; his chances of coming to know better. So, too, the value of the plea of ignorance depends on the whole history of a man's past life; on the light that was about him or within his reach at the time when he went wrong; on the wilfulness with which he went into temptation; on the carelessness with which he missed or slighted the safeguards which would have kept him right. Thus the sins of ignorance may vary almost infinitely in moral gravity and guilt.

2. Such difference there may have been among those for whose forgiveness our Lord prayed, because in crucifying Him they knew not what they did. A question has been raised whether His prayer referred to the Roman soldiers or to the Jews. It is a question which we need not be much concerned to answer, for in both classes, there were those who in different degrees were guilty in their ignorance.

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

¶ In that great picture of the Crucifixion which Luini painted at Lugano, three soldiers stand out remarkably in the group around the cross. The Saviour's agony has closed in death; and near Him stands the soldier who has pierced His side, and seen the sacred blood and water flow therefrom. There is wonder and sadness in his aspect; the hand that holds the spear hangs listlessly, as though the mind were absorbed in thought; and the other hand seems raised to brush away his tears. Behind him another soldier, with arms outstretched and with an earnest, noble face uplifted to the Crucified, seems to be springing forward towards the realization of the truth. Here, at least, however little he may be able to speak of it, even to himself, is something which brings a new hope and power and meaning into life; something at the touch of which all else falls back into insignificance; something which explains the poverty and inadequacy and disappointment he has found elsewhere. At the foot of the cross stands the centurion who has owned the Son of God in the moment of His dying. It is a magnificent face; strong and simple, quiet and courageous; capable of great tenderness and affection; and in the clear eyes there is a far-away look, as though his mind were travelling down lines that had no end, as though he had forgotten all around him in the 'splendour of that sudden thought.' Surely the painter's conception is not merely fanciful. From among the soldiers sent to Calvary that day there may have come the first-fruits of our Saviour's intercession: some who knew not what they did, and yet in doing it had thoughts on which all turned; thoughts which they might thrust away, in hardness, in frivolity, in love of cruelty or gain or pleasure; thoughts which they might, if so they would, pursue and trust, until they found in Him the very light and truth of God sent out to bring them to His holy hill.[1]

3. The text may teach us, then, to see in most classes of the sins of ignorance two elements: one which entails guilt, and one which mitigates it; one calling for judgment, the other for mercy; one the ground of penitence, the other the ground of hope. There are these two elements generally present, and God alone knows in each man's case the measure of either

[1] F. Paget, *Studies in the Christian Character*, 163.

element. We know but little in our own case; we know nothing, or very nearly nothing, in the case of others. We must be fair to ourselves as well as to others; we must be sincere and sober in judging ourselves as well as (when we are compelled to it) in judging others; we must keep clear of unreality and of undisciplined scrupulousness. For ourselves, we may reflect how much more light we should have had if we had used the opportunities which God, we know, has given us; we may inquire carefully whether we are living, or trying honestly to live, by the light we have; we may test the sincerity and earnestness with which we are seeking more light; we may see whether we are really sorry for our sins of ignorance.

¶ How good it would be if we could learn to be rigorous in judgment of ourselves, and gentle in our judgment of our neighbours! In remedying defects, kindness works best with others, sternness with ourselves. It is easy to make allowances for our faults, but dangerous; hard to make allowances for others' faults, but wise. 'If thy hand offend thee, cut it off,' is a word for *our* sins; for the sins of *others*, 'Father, forgive them.' [1]

Lord of All

Luke xxiii. 38.—'A superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This is the King of the Jews.'

Time has invested every detail of the record of the redeeming death of Christ with a great significance to His people. The commonest events of His life have new meanings to us as we read them in the light of His timeless influence over men. The nailing up over Christ's Cross, for instance, of Pilate's inscription in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew, may have been merely an expression of Pilate's ironical contempt of Christ. Or it may have been a confession of Pilate's own inoperative and worthless belief in Christ whom he recognised to be unlike any other he had ever met, and of whose claims he was more or less convinced though himself too morally feeble to give allegiance to his own convictions. It may have been that Pilate wrote these words as a salve to his conscience, in which case he has our pity; or it may be that these words were written in those three languages simply that all classes of men who beheld the Christ crucified might read what was written. And possibly the latter is the more likely explanation.

But now as we look on this detail in the record we see something infinitely greater in Pilate's words than Pilate ever expected or intended. Borrowing George Herbert's line on another matter, we may say of Pilate, 'God held his hand while he did write.' For in this superscription written above the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ we see a great declaration of His entire kingship over the whole world, and a phrasing also of the gospel for all men.

Note the suggested meaning in the inscription written in Greek. That was the language of culture, the language of thought, the language of philosophy. Its literature contains the history of almost the entire mental development of the world. Athens, the chief city of Greece, was the incarnation of that nation's sense of art, of its enduring sense of the beautiful. It stood for the world's highest achievement in that order of things. Latin was the language of domination, of conquest, of power. Its literature is the history of human achievement, of restless purpose, of military prowess, of government, of matchless energy. Rome was the incarnation of a nation's strength and will, the Mistress of the world. Hebrew was the language of the heart, of the emotions, the language of religion. Its literature is a history of the appearances of God to men, of intimations of His Will and care, of human experience as the outcome of Divine intervention. As you read the Hebrew literature you discern in it the song of the pilgrim host. You listen again and hear the sob of the exiled nation. You listen again and catch the sigh of the burdened mingling with the glad note of praise on which those who have found deliverance in God pitch their gratitude. Hebrew is essentially the language of religion.

Each of these three languages may well stand, the Greek for the mind of man, the Latin for the will of man, the Hebrew for the heart and soul of man. And, in a way never dreamed of by him, Pilate's superscription thus stands for Christ's Sovereignty in each of these realms of man's being. He is the Master of

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 6.

the mind; He is the Lord of the will; He is the Sovereign of the heart.

Christ meets the threefold need of our lives in Himself as the perfect manifestation of life in its ideal fulness. The mind which was in Christ Jesus revealed the Mind of God. The will of Jesus Christ expressed in all His doings revealed the Will of God. The heart of Christ with its love, its passion of pity and of moral indignation, revealed the Heart of God. Thus, in Himself, He is the measure of perfect life—of the perfect mind, the perfect will, the perfect heart. And He saves us, in part, by revealing Divine perfection. As amongst ourselves we never help each other by lowering the standards of life or accommodating them to weakness, so He never helps us by making the way of life any easier, by making its demands any less; but always by revealing perfection. It is the high ideal which demands the consecration of every moral energy of our being.

But more particularly, at the Cross each of these three elements of life found its Sovereign.

1. *The Master of the Mind.*—On the Cross we see Christ, the Master of the mind, the solution of all the problems and mysteries which challenge the mind of men in all ages. And what are the great problems of life? They are not concerned with happiness, with material things, with anything that is ephemeral and passing. The final problems of life have to do with sin and conscience and death and eternity. And, blessed be God, they are finally solved in Jesus Christ.

Many a time our hearts will cry out, 'My God, how?' 'My God, why?' 'My God, whence?' But though we may receive no final answer we shall always receive a satisfying instalment of explanation. We may not have light enough to read His righteous decrees, but shall always have light enough to walk in His ways. We shall always find in the Lord Jesus the elucidation of every mystery whose unfolding is necessary to our growth in Christ, our progress in holiness, and our fitness for His service. Christ, the Truth! And the mind can rest there.

2. *The Lord of the Will.*—At the Cross the human will finds its Master. And how is His lordship manifested? By effecting the surrender of our rebellious will to the Divine Will; not merely by exhibiting a life lived under the sway of the holy Will of God, but by persuading us that this is the true way of life, that we do not begin to live until our will has been laid down in glad surrender to the Divine Will which He declares. This is the secret of Christ's power over men right down the centuries. He brings the human will out of conflict with the Divine into concert with the Divine.

¶ O most merciful Jesus, grant to me Thy grace, that it may be with me, and work with me, and continue with me even to the end.

Grant that I may always desire and will that which is to Thee most acceptable, and most dear.

Let Thy will be mine, and let my will ever follow Thine, and agree perfectly with it.

Let my will be all one with Thine, and let me not be able to will, or anything to forgo, but what Thou willest or dost not will.[1]

3. *The Sovereign of the Heart.*—Christ is the Sovereign of the heart by fulfilment of all its quests and satisfaction of its every instinct. How wonderfully, as our Life, He comes into the secret place of our desires whence the issues of life flow out. And how really He controls us just there, directing every moral energy of the redeemed man into paths of peace and ways of useful service.

Read again the Hebrew literature and you will find in it the evidence of ceaseless quest after satisfying religious ideals—an ideal sacrifice, an ideal priesthood, an ideal king. You will find how the heart of man is always going out in its desires after the ideal, the perfect, the ultimate. For thus his kinship with God declares itself. And all this he finds only in Jesus Christ; who, though He reveals the shattered Law, reveals also the sheltering love of God. If we are conscious of our shortcomings, and filled with anxiety as we behold the 'wondrous Cross on which the Prince of Glory died,' it is only that we may be uplifted by His gracious evangel. Transcendent glory becomes triumphant grace in the lives of all who own Him Lord. He tasted death for every man once, and now satisfies the thirst of man's heart by draughts deep and strong of the Divine love and life.

If this superscription in Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew is a true indication of the greatness

[1] Thomas à Kempis.

of His salvation and the scope of His reign, it also affords a test of our lives in their vital and enduring relationships to Him. How far is He actually the King of mind, will, and heart? How far is our Lord Jesus Christ actually in supreme control of our lives? How far has life been reconstituted and reharmonized with His purpose, for His programme?

The Penitent Thief

Luke xxiii. 39-42.—'And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.'

The man was a malefactor—an evildoer—and we are further informed that he was a thief. No one disputes the facts about him; he himself acknowledges them. A common felon—no more: yet it is given to him to be the final witness of Christ on earth, and to enter the unseen world hand in hand with Him who holds the keys of Death and Hades.

The man is a malefactor—but to Jesus he is a *man*. That is one thing which human law perpetually forgets. Who is there who has enough imaginative sympathy to comprehend that the man on whom the prison door has closed still has the aspirations and the rights of a man? The world sees only a malefactor on a cross: but Jesus sees a man. He does not shrink from contact with him—He invites it. He who all His life had seen the essential man beneath the accidents of place and station, sees it still. He who came to save the lost, is true to His mission to the last. The Law may call this forlorn outcast creature what it will, but to Jesus he is still a brother: and doubly so, by the common agony of shame and death they share together.

He is a malefactor—but to Jesus he is a *soul*. Something imperishable beats within that tortured bosom and utters itself through those pale lips. It is the image of God that is nailed to that despised cross, it is the very breath of God that moves within that ruined framework of the body. The crowd around the cross does not remember that, but Jesus does. To Him the man is a soul still, and it is something incorruptible in the man that calls Him 'Lord,' and whispers faintly of a kingdom.

¶ At the International Penal Congress, held in Petrograd, in the summer of 1890, the then head of the Criminal Department in France gave a brilliant address before the whole Congress on 'The Treatment of Incorrigible Criminals.' As representing France, he was received with special attention. The great hall was crowded, and the huge audience listened breathlessly to an eloquent speech. His main theme was that there were, unfortunately, incorrigible criminals—moral incurables 'concerning whom any thought of final rescue and moral cure must be renounced, and all our energy should therefore be concentrated on rendering them harmless to society.'

Mathilda Wrede listened with overpowering emotion. All that brilliant assembly represented prison officials and their laws. She, alone, represented prisoners. Was she worthy of the name of 'Prisoners' Friend' if she dared not rise and protest against this hard, unfeeling utterance? She rose and signified her wish to speak. Then in a silence that might have been felt, she said, 'Gentlemen! There is one means by which every criminal can be transformed, even those usually termed incorrigible. This means is the power of God. Laws and systems cannot change the heart of a single criminal; but God can do it. I am persuaded that, before all else, and far more than hitherto, we must concern ourselves with the souls of prisoners and their spiritual life!'[1]

1. Look first at *the temper of the man*. It is nobly sympathetic, it is pathetically humble. Men meet death in many ways, but the only fitting temper for such an awful hour is heart-felt humility. We all feel this to be true when we study such a character as Falstaff's. The dying reprobate of Shakespeare's art—adventurer, braggart, glutton, profligate—dies babbling of green fields—and the words convey to us the exquisite thought that it was the twenty-third Psalm which Falstaff recited on his death-bed—and reciting it, he again became a child at his mother's knee, learning the verses that speak of green pastures and still waters.

[1] J. H. Howard, *Which Jesus?* 73.

Childhood comes back with death to the heart not utterly corrupted, and life completes its circle. And with it the humility of childhood—the acknowledged need of help—the cry to the Good Shepherd—the desire to fall asleep on some kind bosom. It was so with this man; and this incident seems to have been especially permitted that we may learn that that humblest cry coming from the passing soul is never unheard of God, and that the Good Shepherd can find His lost sheep even in the valley of the Shadow of Death.

But there is more than this. There is another thief, who meets death not with humility, but with curses. In his intractable and stubborn nature no fountain of tenderness springs up. He rails on Christ for no cause that we can discover, for Christ has done him no harm: rails on Him in mere blind rage of heart, ignobly glad to find one who suffers even as he does. For hours that profane voice has spoken through the darkness, until upon this other malefactor it has had an effect unexpected and memorable. It has made him sick of sin. It has set him thinking of his own past life. What a fool he has been to herd with men like this. It had perhaps been a tradition among the lawless comrades of his wasted life to die unsubdued—it is one of the common ethics of crime. He had once told himself that if ever he were crucified, it would be even so that he would die. But as he hangs upon the cross other memories visit him, and other emotions are liberated in his heart. Hitherto he had paid no heed to the Divine sufferer who hung beside him, but now his eyes sought that silent face. This is how he would like to die if he only could. To die with defiant courage—that is how his fellow thief is dying: but how much better to die with tranquil majesty as Christ is dying. A sudden magnanimity of nature wakens in him—a sense of the brotherhood of sorrow. It is a vile and hateful thing to revile a fellow sufferer whoever he may be: he has done many bad things in his life, but this he dare not, cannot do. And so at last he speaks—and it is in defence of Christ—it is in rebuke of his evil-minded comrade. The chord of manly sympathy vibrates in him, and he cries—'Dost not thou fear God—this man hath done nothing amiss.' And in that moment he sees a miracle new and strange—the cross of Jesus is no longer cross but altar—He is not a fellow-victim but a sacrifice—He is in truth the Lord—and the man's broken voice rises into the great words—'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.'

¶ When the weak and self-centred Fred Vincy realized the greatness of Mr Farebrother's sacrifice on his behalf, 'he was moved,' says George Eliot, 'quite newly. The contemplation of a fine act produces a sort of regenerating shudder through the frame, and makes one feel ready to begin a new life.'[1]

2. Listen now to *the man's confession*. 'We indeed suffer justly the true reward of our deeds'—he exclaims. So then conscience is not dead in him, for conscience is the accuser who comes hand in hand with death. The whole structure of his life has fallen, but in one 'ruined belfry the bell of conscience goes on ringing.'

Here, then, is the first element in all true conversion or change of nature, the confession of sin. To say, 'I have done wrong,' is to turn the face toward better things. It is to triumph over vanity and pride, it is to open the whole softened heart to the entrance of new life. And it is this which this man does. He cannot enter the great darkness with that wild bell of conscience tolling in his ears. Let all the world know it—he is guilty. And if we confess our sins there is one who is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and though this man knows it not, in the blood that flows beside him there is the cleansing of all sin.

At first sight it might be supposed that such a confession as this would put an infinite distance between himself and Christ. We should oftener confess our sins to one another if we were quite sure of comprehending pity and magnanimous pardon: but alas, we are far from sure. We know too well that friendship falters and love cools before such a test. Love will not forsake us as long as it believes us innocent: but that is a rare and magnanimous love that loves us no less for knowing us guilty. And with this man there is a further reason for silence. It has dawned upon his dim mind as by a revelation that his fellow sufferer is a man not only innocent but absolutely just. What sympathy can he expect from such a one? How can one who has done no wrong view with any pity such a life as his; follow all its mean temptations and its sordid hopes; enter into

[1] *Middlemarch.*

the intricacies of its baseness, measure the causes and the impulses that drove him into crime? And there lies one of the cardinal mistakes that men make about sin; they suppose that the only person qualified to sympathize with them is a fellow sinner. Never was there a bitterer delusion. The comrades of our vices are the last persons likely to pity us. They are far more likely to jeer at us as this man's comrade on the other cross. If you would find a perfect pity you will only find it in a perfect purity. More than that: perfect justice is the same thing as perfect love; and that is the meaning of the saying that because God is love He is not only faithful but just in forgiving sin. And this the dying thief perceives. He feels instinctively that perfect justice is not a hard but a loving thing; that because Christ is just he can throw himself upon Him, and that his confession will not separate him from the infinite holiness, but draw him near to it.

3. Hear *the man's prayer*—'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' It is of no visible temporal kingdom this man thinks; he is too near death for a thought so empty and so vain. Besides, Christ is visibly dying; the last agony is near. But, hours since, this thief noticed the strange inscription nailed upon the cross of Jesus—'The King of the Jews.' He has since had time to think it over, and to ponder it. In the intervals of pain that sentence has rung through his mind like a living voice. At first he could not understand it, but to his awakened mind at last the meaning has come. He has seen in Jesus a kingliness of soul that triumphs over death, and something tells him that so much virtue cannot wholly perish. To dying men strange things are revealed, and he dreams of an angel-crowded road and a victor passing up to the palace gates of God. Nothing awaits him—a dying thief. No angels of consolation will speak his name when he goes shuddering through the gates of death. Well! let him put all his tangled thoughts into one prayer—'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' It is the cry of the utterly friendless man, to whom the loneliness of death is its most tremendous terror—the piteous appeal—only that he may be remembered by the one kind heart he has ever met.

'I have fought and finished an evil fight,
  I have earned the deadly wages of sin;
It is hard to die in the snow to-night,
  But no man is willing to take me in.'

The sun was low in the changing west,
  The shadows were heavy from hill and tree,
As the Watchman opened the Gate of rest,—
  'I am willing, with all My heart,' said He.[1]

4. And, lastly, notice *Christ's answer*. 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' He has asked to be remembered; Christ says he shall be with Him: Christ says to-day—and in Paradise. Was ever word so gracious? Could it ever have entered into the mind of man to have invented such a saying? But it is no more than we should expect of Christ—it is one with all His words. He will enter the other world with this poor thief upon His bosom. The Good Shepherd will go back to the house of God with this lost sheep upon His shoulder—first of all the saved, trophy won on Golgotha—and there shall be joy among the angels of God more than over many just men who knew of no such anguish of repentance. And if any of us shall ask where and what is Paradise—there is but one reply—where Jesus is, there is Paradise.

'Lord, when Thy kingdom comes, remember
      me!'
  Thus spake the dying lips to dying ears.
O faith, which in that darkest hour could see
  The promised glory of the far-off years!

No kingly sign declares that glory now;
  No ray of hope lights up that awful hour;
A thorny crown surrounds the bleeding brow;
  The hands are stretched in weakness, not
      in power.

Yet hear the word the dying Saviour saith,
  'Thou too shalt rest in Paradise to-day';
O words of love to answer words of faith!
  O words of hope for those who live to pray!

Lord, when with dying lips my prayer is said,
  Grant that in faith Thy kingdom I may see,
And, thinking on Thy Cross and bleeding head,
  May breathe my parting words, 'Remember
      me.'[2]

[1] B. M., *Ezekiel, and Other Poems.*
[2] W. D. Maclagan.

Jesus and the Individual

Luke xxiii. 43.—'To-day shalt thou be with me.'

Jesus had a supreme interest in and care for the individual soul. Any broad view of His life shows us how the individual fascinated, engrossed, absorbed Him. Every close scrutiny of His words or deeds confirms it. When He sits as a guest at a feast, He marks how each one of the company comports himself. When He stands beside the Pool of Bethesda, His eye is fixed upon the one impotent man. When He sees the procession of mourners pass out of the gate of Nain, He picks out the widowed mother in her woe. And thus, when He speaks, how the individual stimulates and rouses Him. He can teach the multitudes until they forget day and night, and hunger and thirst. He can speak with disciples until their hearts burn within them. But He is at His best, if we may venture to say it, when face to face with the individual. Mark Him speaking with Nicodemus, or the woman of Samaria, or the rich young ruler, or with Martha in her sorrow. How marvellous are those conversations! In them you have a glimpse of the unsearchable riches of Christ. But if you would more fully realize how He longed for the individual, listen to His private prayers. How often He prayed for His disciples, one by one, that their faith might not fail we cannot tell. But when we read His high-priestly prayer, we find Him, in petition after petition, revealing His supreme interest in the individual soul.

If that is a certain truth of the ministry of Jesus, we may expect to find it set in clear light in the day of the cross. And what we do find is that, throughout that long day of sorrow and of triumph, Jesus is individualizing men, in spite of themselves. The light from the Cross makes face after face stand out in clear relief. We would not have been surprised had His atoning deed absorbed His thoughts, and in a rapt absorption He had died oblivious of men. We could have adored Him with a worshipping reverence had His heart gone out to the Church which He was purchasing with His own blood, or to that far-off event to which redemption moves. But even on His cross the individual absorbs Him. There is no word which more significantly exposes the inmost mind of Jesus, than that to the first believer in His cross, 'To-day shalt thou be with me.'

Let us consider this supreme interest in the individual, first as a revelation of the mind and heart of God; secondly, as a revelation of the value of each human life; and thirdly, as a revelation of the most imperative duty of the individual soul.

1. *A revelation of the mind and heart of God.*—Every reader who compares the Old Testament with the New is struck with the contrast between them in their interest in the individual. In the Old Testament the individual counts for little. It is 'the people of God,' as a concrete unity, whom God leads, and teaches, with whom He makes His covenant. Even to the later prophets, who realize the value of the soul, and teach its accountability, the supreme concern is still 'Israel.' Now and again the great saints make their personal appeal to God, and speak face to face with Him. Now and again some woman in her childless anguish will dare to believe that God cares for her obscure sorrow, or some sick man makes his prayer out of God's pavilion, or a psalmist-seer looks up into heaven and beholds the face of God. But these were privileged souls. The ordinary man, the humble peasant who tilled the soil and looked up wonderingly into the Syrian blue, did not dare to think that he was of consequence to God.

And who among us, with the New Testament in our hands, has not felt something of the same difficulty? Mark the hurrying crowds in the streets of our great cities; reckon up the millions of heathendom; think upon the countless multitudes of the dead! Who has not found himself trembling; who has not felt prayer to be beset with difficulty, and acceptance of the mercy of God a more daring venture of faith than he had dreamed, when he has considered the transcendence and almightiness of God?

¶ I suppose that every one who thinks about prayer, or any form of communication with God, must at times have been oppressed with some such thought as this: How can the Divine Ruler of millions of worlds be able to attend to the prayer of one of the many millions of inhabitants of one of the million worlds? That, to speak after the manner of men, He must be too busy to care for me. If this be true, we shall certainly find some slackness of His care

in the petty affairs of His smaller creations: some slackness in His ordering of the most insignificant beings. But what do we find in fact? Turn the microscope on to the shells of a diatom, or of a Foraminifer, or on one of the thousands of micro-organisms, and we see the same evidence of design, of order, of beauty: the same evidence of mind as in the starry heavens; we can confidently believe that He who cares for the diatom will care even for me. This thought has often comforted me.[1]

When men realize that God is a personality, and therefore a thinking and devising will; when they consider the meaning of greatness, and infinitude, and omnipotence; when they remember that He is thought of most surely when He is ethically conceived, when He is thought of as love—love which is always individual, and is not weakened by exercise—then it becomes sweet reasonableness to believe that God cares for every individual soul. Then we see that God could not care for and love His world except by loving and caring for its individuals. Then we see that Jesus is the revelation of God in His supreme interest in the individual.

Illustrations abound of this truth that only greatness can individualize. Think, for instance, of a great orchestra interpreting a masterpiece in music. To an untrained ear, the part played by many of the instruments is unrecognizable. One could imagine that were some minor instrument to cease, or were some blundering player to make a discord, it would matter little in so great a volume of sound. But to the master mind who wields the baton, each string and reed, and every insignificant instrument, is of supreme consequence. Not one of them would be lost without his knowledge and pain. If it be so with the finite mind of man surely we can believe—although it should bewilder our imaginations—that each one of us, however obscure, is known by, and is of consequence to, that great God who is a loving and purposing will.

That is the truth which shines in the supreme care of Jesus for the individual. 'Having seen Him, we have seen the Father also.' When we hear Jesus say: 'If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?' 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall upon the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.' When we see Him calling His own sheep by name, and leading them out; when we mark Him dealing with each disciple as a mother would deal with each child; when we hear Him weeping by the tomb of Lazarus; above all, when we follow His steps on the day of the Cross, we see His supreme care for the individual, and we have revealed to us the mind and heart of God.

¶ 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.' This is the last word which can be said. Nothing can go beyond it, and at times it is the only ground which we feel does not shake under our feet. . . . Looking at the masses of humanity, driven this way and that way, the Christian teaching is apt to be forgotten that for each individual soul there is a vocation as real as if that soul were alone upon the planet. Yet it is a fact.[1]

2. *A revelation of the value of each human life.*—If the individual were of little account to God; if men were born and died, like the flies that dance in the setting sun and die when it is gone, then life would be a tragic pageant, and destiny the most mocking word that human lips could frame. For this is precisely the quality that marks the soul of man and gives value to his life—that he has a spiritual and immortal life consciously within him. Man looks forward with a prophetic eye; he has depths of love and hope in his being; he has a craving for an eternal life. If the individual be only like a grain of sand by the seashore, the sport of every wave, or a drop out of the ocean to sink back into it again, what meaning or value is there in the struggle of life? And what torture is there in the thought of the quenching of its pure and purifying loves and hopes!

Do you remember how this thought smote Tennyson?—

> And he, shall he,
>
> Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
> Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
> Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
> Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

[1] A. Fry, *Memoir of Sir Edward Fry*, 171.

[1] Mark Rutherford.

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
  Who battled for the True, the Just,
  Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
  A discord. Dragons of the prime,
  That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.

But if each man be of infinite value to God; if even an obscure life of toil, with its pains and hopes, and fears and prayers, be intimately known to God; if God cares, as only love can care, when holy desire is throbbing in the soul, when brave and costly deeds are done, what an infinite zest there is in living, what an unspeakable value there is in life!

That is the revelation Jesus has given us in His supreme care for the individual. When we see Him letting virtue pass out of Him that He might restore the years of an infirm, unnoticed, neglected beggar; healing the demoniac in his agony; flooding the soul of a woman of wasted life with peace and strength; moving about among the peasants of Galilee and the fishermen of its lake, and caring for their simple sorrows; assuring the troubled hearts of disciples that He is preparing a place for them, where He will receive them to Himself; we see God in Christ caring for the individual soul. And we realize that Jesus was opening out His very heart when He said to His daring disciple: 'To-day shalt thou be with me.'

¶ When He talked with the woman at the well, Christ evidently believed that He was facing the supreme value of all eternity. He was not concerned about any religious system, and still less about any political imperialism. He was eager to save this woman. Here is something that the Moslem knows nothing about. That individual men are mere insects as compared with a religious creed or system, he understands. That all the religious systems in the world, all the creeds, all the rituals, all the world's ecclesiastical pronouncements, and all its political organizations are insects compared with individual men, the only real eternal value in God's universe—this he does not understand. That we seek men because of their incomparable value, because they are the only thing on the earth beneath or in heaven above that God cares anything about—for the Moslem such an idea is treason to God and religion when seen from the outside, and a dazzling new truth, with divine power in it, when seen from the inside.[1]

3. *A revelation of the most imperative duty of the individual soul.*—If God so loves and cares, and so needs the individual, the imperative business of life is to make response to God, to love Him in return, to bring the spirit into correspondence with Him, and the life into harmony with His will.

This is the imperative duty of the individual soul, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of the commonweal. The reason underlying the supreme interest of Jesus was this—that the commonwealth of souls, or, as He called it, the Kingdom of God, is built up of individuals who have made response to God. It is not by edicts, nor by diplomacies, nor by legislation, that men are to be brought into blessedness. Our Puritan forefathers may not seem to have had the sweetness and light, the tolerance and grace, the width of mind and catholicity of temper we now think admirable. But this one thing they saw, this one thing they knew by an illuminating experience, that the commonwealth of upright and justice-doing and peace-loving men is to be attained only as individual souls bow down to Jesus. This may seem a long and difficult way to the moralization of the nations, the purifying of society, the order and blessedness of men. But there is no shorter way—there is no other way. The course of history is strewn with the pathetic evidences of the failure of earnest men who have thought to bring in new eras of well-being for humanity by edicts, by the inculcation of ideas, by the contagion of romantic and heroic feeling, by the increase of a merely secular knowledge. They have failed, because they have not realized that to redeem humanity each individual man must be redeemed.

¶ The root idea of the Kingdom of God is, that it grows from the one to the many, from the centre to the circumference, from the citizen to the State. Its end is, indeed, the well-being of all; but it accomplishes that end by the purification and regeneration of each. It is content to work slowly, silently, beneath the surface, and its method—if method it can be called—is a kind of divine contagion. In accordance with this, Christ enacted no laws,

[1] P. W. Harrison, in *The Moslem World of To-day*, 327.

laid down no regulations, for the mystic commonwealth which He came to found; but only drew to Himself, here and there, a congenial spirit, and declaring great moral principles, left them to make their way in men's hearts, and finally to issue in institutions. And I need not point out to you, that there is nothing coercive or even regulative in this process. It is simply the contact of mind with mind, the kindling of heart from heart.[1]

The Word of a King

Luke xxiii. 43.—'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'

Before this our Lord had answered no one. But no one had spoken to Him as this man did. The passers-by had that morning mocked and taunted Jesus, and even the chief priests and elders had joined in the unlovely chorus. The Divine Sufferer, however, had maintained unbroken silence until He replied to the penitent malefactor.

1. The word of Christ in response to that great cry of faith, 'Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,' was the word of a King. 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' 'Thou shalt be with me.' In that promise there is nothing of the hesitation or faltering or qualification with which we must needs, too often, comfort the sinful and departing soul. For we cannot read men's inmost hearts, or gauge the measure of their responsibility; we know little of the conditions of the world which awaits them beyond the grave. But Christ knew all, knows all. 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' This is the same voice of power which made all men wonder when they heard Him speak with calm confidence of the purposes of God and the destiny and duty of men. 'He taught as one having authority.'

¶ Perhaps in no other saying does Jesus so strongly witness to Himself as the Christ. In beautiful silence He hears the railer, leaving him to be reproved by the echo of his own words; in beautiful speech He answers the prayer of the penitent, and promises more than is asked. Was the promise but an empty word? The heart of the ages has confessed, if Jesus was ever real it was now. He who after such a life could so speak in the face of death to the dying must hold the keys of paradise; and if He could open it then, what must He be able to do now?[1]

2. Christ's gift to him is the entire absolution of the penitent, the assurance of a speedy entrance into the Paradise of God, the pledge of fellowship in the joy of his Lord. It is no cheap gift. When we are tempted to think lightly of the forgiveness which Christ bestows, let us remember that Calvary was the price which both the Giver and the receiver had to pay for this absolution. It was the Cross of Jesus that opened the gate of Paradise.

Let us look at the promises contained in this answer of our Lord.

(1) *To-day thou shalt be.*—Here, first, the dying man is promised the perfect continuance, through death, of his personality. 'To-day thou shalt be.' The sun would set, the mangled and broken body would be thrown into its wretched grave. But the man, the *ego*, would persist beyond it, above it, identical and profoundly living. As little as Jesus was about to be extinguished by His body's death, so little was the 'thief' about to be by his; this is guaranteed by the voice of Him who was so soon to die, and then to rise again for ever, 'in the power of an endless life.' Let us lay down all *a priori* difficulties about spirit-life at His dear feet; He has given us His personal assurance of the fact of it, and sealed it with His resurrection.

(2) *To-day thou shalt be in Paradise.*—Then, next, we have the promise here that the conscious personality, passing from the body, enters in the name of Christ upon an experience of security, repose, and beauty. 'In Paradise,' said the Lord. 'Paradise' is an oriental word, meaning a royal pleasure-ground, a royal park or garden. It calls up ideas accordingly of all that is rich and fair in the way of cultured nature. It suggests to us the loveliness of wood, and lawn, and flowers, and waters, and also of the company which possesses and enjoys the charming scene, the friends, the guests, the family, of the King. They are there for delightful rest, or for delightful exercise. They have come from the battle-field, or the council, or

[1] Charles Beard.

[1] A. M. Fairbairn, in *The Expositor*, 1st Ser., xii. 373.

the journey, to walk, to recline, to converse, to listen, where all is beautiful with a large, ordered, stately beauty.

There falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns,
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea.

And all this is taken up by the Lord Jesus, in His use of the word Paradise, to set forth one side of the believer's unseen life after death. After the manner in which spirits enjoy and spirits see, the departed Christian 'walks, by sight,' in a scene of glorious and restful beauty in the garden of his King. 'O my dear wife!' said an aged saint, no visionary, in the moment of his departure, putting his hand upon her arm. It was, she said, the very phrase, tone, and action, with which he had once called her attention to a sudden burst of beauty, an 'earthly Paradise,' as they turned a mountain corner in the Highlands.

(3) *To-day thou shalt be with me.*—The loneliness of death is a large part of its terror. Human love and friendship will not avail us at the moment of parting. We must die alone, and pass alone into that world beyond, of which we know nothing. That is its dread. But His promise is, 'Thou shalt be with me.' His companionship is promised beyond the gates of death, in that unknown land where we shall await the judgment.

¶ Livingstone *looks* lonely in darkest Africa. In that rude hut up at Chitambo's village, far from the nearest white man, he dies upon his knees. No figure in history seems more forsaken. But is he? The last entries in his diary answer that question. His Lord, he tells us, was with him—consciously with him—to the end. And he died, mark you, on his knees. To whom, then, was he speaking? By whom was he attended? Dr J. G. Paton *looks* lonely as he stands, 'ringed round with death,' among the bloodthirsty savages of the South Seas. Once or twice it looked as if nothing could save him from assassination. 'Still,' he tells us, 'I was never left without hearing that promise in all its consoling and supporting power coming up through the darkness and the anguish: "Lo, I am with you alway."'[1]

[1] F. W. Boreham, *A Tuft of Comet's Hair*, 137.

Jesus is the glory of the immortal Garden. Jesus is the sacred hearth-fire of the immortal Home. Heaven is just the bliss of His immediate presence. So heaven is possible for those only to whom His presence is bliss. But oh, for them, what will it not be? The Paradise will be not only a sweet new world of rest and beauty, not a scene only of 'pleasures for evermore,' nor even only a state of blissful and undisturbed intercourse with the blessed ones who have entered in before us. It will be all this, in a degree inconceivable to us now. But all this will be just the circumference round that one possible living and life-giving centre; 'thou shalt be with me.' The Home will be indeed a circle of blessed fellowship, a place of inconceivable interchange of love and joy among its inhabitants. But the supreme bliss of it, which will always spring up through everything else, and be first in everything, is this—we shall have 'got home to the Lord.'

We know not when, we know not where,
We know not what that world will be;
But this we know: it will be fair
To see.

With heart athirst and thirsty face
We know and know not what shall be:
Christ Jesus bring us of His grace
To see.

Christ Jesus bring us of His grace,
Beyond all prayers our hope can pray,
One day to see Him face to Face,
One day.[1]

The Rent Veil

Luke xxiii. 45.—'The veil of the temple was rent in the midst.'

Among the strange happenings which accompanied our Lord's death on the Cross was one which, by its religious significance, fired the imagination of the disciples like a revelation. The veil of the Temple which secluded the Holy of Holies and shut it off from the gaze of ordinary worshippers was either violently thrust aside or torn into two. This occurrence, simple and natural in itself, was hailed by the receptive

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

minds of the disciples as a symbol and token, full of eternal meanings.

We know what the great Temple represented, and especially what the Veil typified. In that holy building was focused all the past and the future of Jewish worship. It was the material symbol of God's ancient covenant with men. Their hopes of forgiveness and any possibility of true communion with God centred in the rites which were performed in this place. The priests of God went back and forward to the altar and offered sacrifices for the sin of man. Behind the Veil was the Holy of Holies, where was the mercy-seat with the ark of the covenant, the place that God inhabited—so sacred that the High Priest alone was permitted to approach, not without sacrifice of blood, and only once a year. For there, behind the Veil, God Himself dwelt—a God unapproachable, distant, awful—a God whom men must fear, into whose intimate presence no ordinary man dare come.

'And now,' said the disciples, 'the veil of the temple is rent in twain.' Jesus has come; Jesus has lived; Jesus has died. The ancient covenant and the ancient religion are gone for ever. No longer must men approach God in this indirect and artificial way. The Jewish religion has served its day, in God's good providence; but now there is opened up a new and glorious way. For Christ has come and Christ has died—and lo, 'the veil of the temple is rent for ever.'

1. In this symbol the disciples saw that *the day of Judaism was done.*

In believing this, they do not minimize or decry what the religion of the Jews had stood for. Far from it!—they were devout Jews themselves. They had gloried in that Temple and in the true religion of God which it represented. But they saw that the old Temple service and the narrow Jewish religion were but a shadow of what Jesus had now made real. When the perfect thing comes, the imperfect must go. How imperfect that Temple ritual was! If a man came longing, as the heart of man must long, for a true vision of God and a true communion, what did he get in this Temple service? He found, at the outset, that he needed a 'go-between,' an official priest who could alone represent him to his Father. He himself could never know God, see God, or hold the direct communion with God that his soul desired. Between him and the Father was that mystic yet real Veil that shut him out from an Almighty who was unapproachable by the ordinary seeker. Then there were the paltry sacrifices he brought! What could these do? They were a beautiful symbol, no doubt, of repentance and forgiveness; but could he never experience the loving voice of God speaking directly to his own soul? The Jew longed for intimate communion with God, but to him there was only the dim Temple; the pathetic little sacrifices lying in his hands; the official priests; and as an emblem of it all, that heavy thick veil, a curtain that shut him out cruelly from the presence of the Father.

¶ 'How dost Thou hide Thyself, O God, Thou only great, that dwellest in high places in silence!' cries Augustine. In many Christian Churches that is still the governing conception. The Roman Church, in particular, is built upon the inviolable mystery of God. All words are vain, all human faculty is baffled; the impossible at every hour is done, and the wafer of mere bread becomes the very body of the Eternal Son of God, so that reason is flouted and discredited. And since it is impossible for men to know, the Church has arranged a multitude of significant formalities, which keep them in mind of the great reality.[1]

'But the veil of the temple was rent.' He would be a man of little spiritual vision who could not find in that fact the glorious symbol which gladdened the hearts of these disciples. As they thought both of Jesus and of the rent veil, they cried, 'This is God's new day: the old has passed.' Surely we may join in their gladness.

2. In this strange happening the disciples saw that *Jesus had gathered up and perfected in Himself the best that lay in the past.*

It is foolish, and inaccurate, to think that the early Christians considered the Jewish religion a defeated and useless thing. Rather did they continue it in Jesus, for they considered Him the completion, the promised crown, of it all. The past was done, not because the old was bad, but because the new was better. The religion of Jesus was not some new and startling thing that flouted the old, but something that grew out of and perfected the old. Jesus Himself was the crown of all prophecy and the consummation of all history.

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, 177.

Thus, when the disciples took that rent veil as a symbol, it was not because they believed that Christ's message was something new, displacing the old as a machine of new design displaces an antiquated instrument, but because they regarded Christ as the flower, the crown, the perfection of all the past. He gathered up in Himself the ancient longings of men and women, all the hopes and aspirations of the eternal human heart.

3. In this symbol of the rent veil the disciples saw that the Master had given *a new start and a new hope in the world's history*.

In Jesus they saw that at last God had come out into the open! He was fully 'seen of men,' seen by the eye of the simplest worshipper. In past days Jehovah had dwelt within that concealing curtain, and had been shrouded from the world, as something too terrible and awesome for the sinful eyes of men. But in Jesus all the man-made restrictions were torn aside and God's Holy of Holies was open to the gaze of all wistful souls. There was no longer any need of that elaborate Temple ritual—neither the priest, nor the sacrifice, nor the mysterious veil. From this time, any soul that came in Jesus' name had the right of immediate and personal entrance.

¶ 'The Kingdom of Christ,' writes Bishop Lightfoot, 'is not limited by the restrictions which fetter other societies, political or religious. It is free, comprehensive, universal. It accepts all comers who seek admission, irrespective of race or caste or sex. It has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe between God and man, by whose intervention God is reconciled and man is forgiven. Each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. From his Lord directly each obtains pardon, draws strength, and receives grace.'

¶ When God's own hand took the massive and splendid curtain out of the way He taught me the priesthood of all believers. There is no aristocracy in His New Testament Church; the common people are endowed with the privileges which used to be kept for the favoured few. There is no sealed and forbidden shrine; there is a sanctuary, an altar, a throne of grace, to which every one has unfettered access. That afternoon in Jerusalem, any could go into the Ark and the Mercy-Seat—the lepers; the children; the woman who had been a sinner; Peter who had just denied his Master; even Judas, if only Judas were touched into penitence and prayer. Nothing hindered them, and nothing hinders now. I have joyous confidence to enter God's secret place.[1]

If the work of Jesus means anything, it means surely the nearness, the intimacy, and the personal contact of the seeking soul with the seeking God. To the Jews, God was in His heaven: and at best some mysterious Presence dwelt furtively behind the veil. But to us, by the work of Jesus, God dwells on this earth—here with us—in our hearts. He is ours; and we are His.

Into Thy Hands

Luke xxiii. 46.—'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.'

What a scene was that in which the words of the text had their setting, as the ordeal of agony ended, and the evening closed in. Never did the dying sun look down upon a scene more ghastly, not alone in its physical horror, but in its moral atrocity. Kindness crucified by cruelty, Love put to death by brutality, Justice defamed by cunning, malignant bigotry—tragedy can go no further! Outwardly the Cross was an utter defeat; inwardly it was the ultimate victory. Whether these last words were a parting wrench of pain, a prayer of relief at the mercy of death, or a cry of joy that He had endured to the end, we know not. Perhaps they were all these in one, telling us that He had triumphed, not only over physical torture and moral outrage, but over those dark foes, we know not nor can name, which assail the soul in its extremity.

> Friend, it is over now,
> The passion, the sweat, the pains,
> Only the truth remains.[2]

As men live so they die, death being an apocalypse of life, revealing its faith, its passion, and its ruling vision. If one has lived the sceptical life, critical, questioning, doubting, he will say with Hobbes: 'I am going to take a

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, 376.
[2] John Masefield, *Good Friday*.

leap in the dark; I commit my body to the worms and my spirit to the great Perhaps.' If he has been a seeker after light, searching for it in high places and low, in far places and near by, he will say with Goethe, 'More light, more light!' If he has lived as Wesley lived, dedicated to God and His service, and to man and his redemption, he will come to his end with the assurance: 'The best of all is, God is with us.' If he has lived the life of a jester, as Rabelais did, he will say: 'Let down the curtain; the farce is played out.' What determines the course of the life of a man decides his attitude in death; and so it was with the Great Life. The last words of Jesus were a quotation from the Psalms, the book of the poetry and piety of the people of His fathers, in which so many had found succour before Him and so many have found solace since.

In the Psalm the prayer has reference to life; it is the committal of the spirit in the midst of tumult and danger to the merciful and faithful keeping of One able to protect and deliver. On the Cross, in the midst of darkness and anguish, it is used as the expression of life's last act of renunciation—the surrender of the departing spirit to God. It is not a cry like the psalmist's, to be preserved from death, but a cry to be preserved through death unto everlasting life. But Jesus made the ancient prayer His own—made it personal, and also transformed it into a prayer of filial and most tender confidence by substituting the word 'Father' for the original 'O Lord, thou God of truth.'

1. *Father.*—This is pre-eminently the word of Jesus; His one name for God, the central persuasion and confidence of His soul, the key to His life, the first and the last in His teaching. It is the one recorded word of His youth: 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' It was the word from heaven heard in His heart at the opening of His public career—a crisis marked by a new disclosure and realization of His Sonship to God. It was the first word of the prayer He taught His disciples; the word with which He accepted the inevitable in Gethsemane; the first word from the Cross, and the last before 'the deep, vast speechlessness of death.' It was the ruling passion of His life—the passion which had moved Him to intense and tireless toil and sacrifice, and sustained Him amidst the temptations of manhood, and which strengthened Him in the hour of His final conflict and calmed Him with its most tranquil assurance.

This prayer of Jesus has been echoed again and again by generations of disciples who have lived and died in His faith and spirit. Experience shows that Jesus helps all who believe in Him to believe in His Father. His mediation is not obstruction in the soul's way to God, but a means of direct and dear communion. It cannot be said that we have truly found Jesus if in finding Him we have not also found the Father. The Father was everything to Jesus, and He is everything to those who stand in the inner circle of the disciples of Jesus. We go to Him, and at once He would lead us past Himself to His Father. We tarry in His company, and in the depths of His fellowship we find we are in fellowship with His Father, with no one, not even Himself, between. The name in which He prayed at the last that His followers might be kept, and in which alone there is security and unity, was not His own, but His Father's: 'Holy father, keep them in thy name.' The perfect and final action of the spirit of Christ on the spirits of men is in the fulfilment of the prayer: 'As thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one even as we are'—children with Father, related to God, not in measure, but in kind, as was the blessed Son whose glory it was to have no glory of His own, to love, trust, and obey His Father through life and unto death.

¶ It is told of the late Thomas Erskine of Linlathen that once meeting a shepherd in the Highlands, he said to him, in that tone which combined in so peculiar a manner sweetness and command, and with that penetrating emphasis which drew out of every word that he used the whole depth of its meaning, 'Do you know the Father?' and that years afterwards, on those same hills, he encountered the same shepherd, who came up and grasped the arm of him whose words had brought to him the assurance that he was the object of eternal love and care, and said, 'Mr Erskine, I know the Father now.'

2. *Into thy hands.*—What Jesus saw behind the heavy drapery of death He did not tell us, except that the Father is there. For Him that was enough. He was utterly confident, but in

nowise curious, willing to wait the will of the Father into whose soft, fascinating shadow He went without fear. Here is a vision of death that is itself victory, for it disentangles it from dread, disinfects it of terror, and makes it holy and beautiful. 'Into thy hands'—that is the highest faith, as it is the truest wisdom; and we need not fear to fall into those Father-hands whose fingers formed our very being, even as they piled up the mountains and set the stars in their orbits. No, we do not sink into disease, decay, and destruction, but into the hands of Him who made us for Himself, and He will keep that which we commit to His care.

Whatever darkness gather
O'er coverlet or pall,
Since Thou art Abba, Father,
Why should I fear at all?

Thou'st seen how closely, Abba, when at rest,
My child's head nestles to my breast;
And how my arm her little form enfolds
Lest in the darkness she should feel alone;
And how she holds
My hands, my hands, my two hands in her own?

A little easeful sighing
And restful turning round,
And I too, on Thy love relying,
Shall slumber sound.[1]

By the same token, let us trust into those hands the keeping of our dear, pitiful, august dead, of whom we think so often and with such unutterable longing. They are His. He made them, He loves them, and He will do for them more than we can ask or think or dream.

Leave them with God!
Love's arms are His,
And 'tis
His Love and Thought in us
That bids us dare
To lay them in His arms
And leave them there.

3. *My spirit.*—Jesus did not think of His body, nor did He fear them that kill the body; He thought only of His spirit, in prayer commending it to the Father of Spirits. 'My spirit'—how lovely, how heroic, how lofty and pure it was, all-forgiving and all-enduring, the glory and sanctity of the world! What is spirit if it be not light and flame and beauty? More subtle than ether, more swift than thought, it is life at its highest, its finest, its holiest—that within us akin to God. It is that which touches dull matter and transfigures it into shapes lovely and haunting. God is spirit! Even so, dying, Jesus surrendered His spirit to the Universal Spirit, as a spark ascending seeks the sun, giving back in a last renunciation the precious thing God had given to Him.

All high wisdom, all heroic faith comes at last to this: victory over life, over death, over self, over sin is won by surrender to the loving will of Him whose we are and who made us for Himself. The dying prayer of Jesus only breathed out the spirit, the habit, the joy of His life. What He did on the Cross He had been doing all His days, offering Himself to His Father to serve or to suffer, to do or to bear; and in death He made a last offering. It is this that makes the Cross not simply a martyrdom, but a revelation of a Wisdom deeper than we can imagine, and of a Love that is the keeper of unknown redemptions. Nor should we ever have known this truth in its height and depth and wonder but for 'that strange Man on the Cross' outside the city gate, who by His surrender became our Saviour and by His suffering became our Healer. Even now we cannot truly know it until we take up our cross and follow Him, living the surrendered life, giving our utmost to the highest.

[1] W. Canton.

The Supremacy of Character

Luke xxiii. 50, 51.—'A good man, and a just . . . who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.'

THE supremacy of character is the keynote to the Christian view of life and the world. Goodness is the incomparable achievement of a human life—of all the possible ambitions of a man's career the greatest, the divinest, the most difficult; a thing which he may easily miss, but for the loss of which, if he misses it, there is no compensation or redress.

1. Character is not merely the aim of Christian teaching, it is the one sure test of the

reality of Christian faith. Everywhere in the Gospels we see how the Lord judged men by their character—how He would overlook all else, how divinely patient He would be of failures and weaknesses and mistakes, if only He saw in the man or woman before Him, however clouded by avarice or ignorance or lust, a dim spark of vital goodness. None were ever so sharply rebuked by Him as the Pharisees; and what offended Him in the Pharisees was not so much their theological teaching as their want of character, of saintliness. He said that they were hypocrites, that they were playing a part, that they had the form of goodness but not the spirit of it, that they were like Dead Sea apples, beautiful without but turning to ashes on the lips.

When we look at the first record of His own systematic teaching, in the Sermon on the Mount, we find that He begins with Beatitudes. And whom does Christ pronounce blessed? When He spoke, 'the world,' as it has been truly said, 'had its own idea of blessedness. Blessed is the man who is always right. Blessed is the man who is satisfied with himself. Blessed is the man who is strong. Blessed is the man who rules. Blessed is the man who is rich. Blessed is the man who is popular. Blessed is the man who enjoys life. . . . Not one of these men entered Jesus' mind when He treated of blessedness. Blessed, said He, is the man who thinks lowly of himself, who has passed through great trials; who gives in and endures; who longs for perfection; who carries a tender heart; who has a passion for holiness; who sweetens human life; who dares to be true to conscience.'

And as the Lord's moral teaching begins with the Beatitudes, so, we may almost say, with the Beatitudes it ends. When He pictures Himself as the Judge of men in some last and awful Day, dividing them all into two great classes for condemnation or acquittal, where falls the dividing line? It is on character that it falls—between those who have served and those who have not served; between those who have felt the pity and the passion of human life, and those who have lived wholly for themselves; between those who have seen the world an hungered and have fed it, and those who have passed by and let things alone.

2. But when we look about us in the world we find that even Christian men do not always allow to character, to goodness, that royal supremacy which the Gospel has conferred upon it.

(1) On the one side we are constantly disturbed by *the contrast of character and opinions.* There is a general tendency, both in politics and in religion, to judge and to value men much more by their opinions than by their character. Our first question about a man is, 'What are his views? Does he belong to my own party? Does he hold this or that doctrine, or practise this or that ritual?' We ought rather to ask, 'Is he a really good man? Is his religion a power in him and not a form? Is he true, earnest, self-devoted, sincere?' No doubt in the end a man's opinions modify his character, and what he thinks goes some way towards making him what he is; but that is vastly less so than we generally imagine. In any case it is character that we must put first. Take care of what you are, and what you think will take care of itself.

¶ The teaching of Jesus places the emphasis upon life and character and service. He formulated no creed. He elaborated no doctrine. The Sermon on the Mount is full of practical directions concerning life and character. Very early, however, in the Christian movement the emphasis was shifted. The Sermon on the Mount fades into the background; a formal statement of belief comes to the front; doctrinal tests and dogmatic standards take the place of the simple and practical teaching of Jesus. For long centuries we have been more interested in what a man believed than in the way he lived, and correctness of creed has been more significant with us than correctness of deed.[1]

(2) And then, again, as there is the contrast of character and opinions, so there is *the contrast of character and possessions.* If a man is good, the world can give him nothing and can take nothing away: that is the teaching of Jesus Christ. If a man is bad, or indifferent about goodness, he may 'heap up riches,' in the sarcastic phrase of the Psalmist, but nevertheless his life will be a failure. Christianity takes no note of a man's possessions, except so far as they bring with them moral opportunities or temptations, and become helps or hindrances to spiritual growth. It is simply indifferent; it does not care. And it does not care, because

[1] L. H. Bugbee, *Christ To-day*, 12.

it is wholly absorbed in the man's character, in his personality, in what he is, or is likely to become, in himself. If our life is indeed as a smoke that rises for a moment on the air and then disappears, if it is as a flower that lives through a summer day, and is cut down or withered when the evening falls, what matters, what can matter in the end, but character, the soul? What shall a man give—though it were another world

Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,—

what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

¶ 'I have come to see,' wrote John Richard Green, towards the close of his life, 'that cleverness, success, attainment, count for little, that goodness or character is the important thing in life.'

3. We are apt to think of the saints as a special class set apart from others, remote from the stir and business of life, with claims upon our respect, but hardly on our imitation. It is true, indeed, that they—'the noble living and the noble dead'—do hold up before us a standard very different from that of the world at large, that they have aims and ambitions peculiar to themselves, that they measure failure and success in a quite uncommon way. As we look at a really good man we see that he has an air of distinction. He seems to stand aloof, and bear the mark of separateness upon him. He confronts the world perpetually with a new measure of what is worth having and being, and what is not worth having and being; and by his own behaviour he pours a silent and eloquent contempt on all its little hopes and fears and plans and struggles. The world thinks, and has always thought, that what we call the external goods of life are the things to be most coveted and sought after—such as money, rank, popularity, society, distinguished position, pleasure, fame. To St Francis or à Kempis all these things, in proportion to his own goodness, will appear matters of indifference. To him character will be more than comfort, and service than self-advancement.

¶ In 1871 I went to Livingstone in Africa as prejudiced as the biggest atheist in London. To a reporter and correspondent such as I, who had only to deal with wars, mass meetings, and political gatherings, sentimental matters were entirely outside my province. But there came for me a long time for reflection. I was out there away from a worldly world. I saw this solitary old man there, and asked myself, 'How on earth does he stop here—is he cracked, or what? What is it that inspires him?' For months after we met I simply found myself listening to him, wondering at the old man carrying out all that was said in the Bible: 'Leave all things, and follow me.' But little by little his sympathy for others became contagious; my sympathy was aroused; seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness, and how he went about his business, I was converted by him, although he had not tried to do it.[1]

But it is only in this sense that the saint stands apart. For the rest, he is a man among men, one of ourselves, toiling along a path that is open to us all. When St Paul wrote to the Church of Corinth, and told his readers that they were 'called to be saints,' it was to the business men, the merchants, the slaves, of a Greek seaport town that he was writing. Goodness is the supreme thing in life, just because it is the one thing possible to us all. If there is justice in the saying that 'in every one who believes in the Son of God, there are the makings of a hero,' if real goodness, like real greatness, is 'to take the common things of life and walk truly among them,' then there is no reason why we too should not be among the saints.

¶ Luther Burbank, the Californian florist, has succeeded in raising out of a wild field daisy a blossom five to seven inches in diameter; a gladioli of greatly enhanced beauty he has taught to flower around the entire stem, instead of on one side only; the poppy he has so enlarged that it measures ten inches across its brilliant bloom; and the amaryllis has increased in diameter from two inches to nearly a foot. Are not corresponding enlargements and transfigurations possible in our moral and spiritual life? Our present graces may be starved and meagre; our kindness, justice, truth, patience, purity, and love, of the meanest growth, no better than the coarse grasses and dwarf blossoms of the prairie; and yet how large their possibilities! How delicate and splendid these traits of Christian character when seen in the Master, and in the disciples who follow Him closely! And there is no strength,

[1] H. M. Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone.*

serenity, or charm that we admire in the elect that may not be reproduced in the weakest of us.[1]

Joseph of Arimathaea

Luke xxiii. 50-52.—'And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just: (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathæa, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.'

The crucifixion of our Lord produced strange and startling effects in moral experience, as well as in the physical world. The veil of the Temple was rent from top to bottom as if a hand from heaven had torn it, in order to teach men that the ancient ritual was done with. Darkness covered the earth, suggesting to thoughtful minds the guilt of the world and the mystery of the sacrifice which atoned for it. Concurrently with these physical phenomena were spiritual experiences. The Roman centurion who, in command of four soldiers, had the duty of seeing the sentence of the law duly executed, was so profoundly moved by what he saw of the Divine Sufferer and by His dying cry, that he exclaimed, 'Truly this was the Son of God,' and thus he became the first of the great multitude out of all nations who give honour to the Lamb that has been slain. The women, too, who were sometimes despised for weakness and timidity, proved themselves in this crisis to be heroines. And Joseph of Arimathæa, who up to this moment of shame and apparent defeat had been content to remain a secret disciple of our Lord, now boldly avowed his love and loyalty.

This man is described as an 'honourable counsellor,' which doubtless means a member of the Sanhedrin. He is also spoken of as 'a good man and a just,' which could not have been said of many of his fellow-counsellors. On this occasion his action was sufficiently important in its relation to prophecy, and in its bearing as evidence of the reality of the burial and of the Resurrection of our Lord, to be mentioned in each of the Four Gospels. Yet neither by this nor by social influence, nor by brilliant gifts (if he possessed them), did he become prominent in the early Church. Probably he was a man of practical sagacity and ready resource, rather than of great spiritual force. He must be regarded as a common soldier, rather than as a general in Christ's army; but when the officers had fallen, or deserted their Leader, he bravely stepped to the front and proved himself a hero.

If we piece together the few fragments of his biography which are scattered through the Four Gospels, we shall gain a fuller and more accurate conception of the man.

1. It is clear that Joseph had already protested against the wrong done to our Lord by the Sanhedrin, though he had been powerless to prevent it. In this protest no doubt Nicodemus would have sided with him, but he was probably absent, for Joseph seems to have stood alone in his refusal to condemn the prophet of Nazareth. This was not easy. He would be urged to vote with his fellow-counsellors on the ground that their ecclesiastical authority, which had been defied, must be maintained, and that loyalty to the Sanhedrin demanded that all members of it should sink their private opinions in its defence. To hold out against an otherwise unanimous council would be the more difficult if Joseph had but recently attained the honour of membership; and this is probable, for the allusion to his 'new grave' seems to imply that he had not long resided in Jerusalem. It was difficult, and possibly dangerous, to assert his independence; but he did so by vote, if not by voice, for he 'had not consented to the counsel and deed of them.'

Right-minded men are not infrequently placed in a similar position. A policy may be initiated of which they disapprove, and yet their protest against it may wreck the party and even displace the Government, so that they naturally hesitate between party loyalty and enlightened conscience. Others who are engaged in business, or in professional affairs, have sometimes to confront doubtful practices which, though sanctioned by custom, unquestionably tend to the lowering of the moral tone of the nation. Their own financial interests, their fear of casting a slur on some known to them, who, though guilty of such practices, are in other respects honourable men, and their dread of posing before the world as over-scrupulous, pharisaic men, who are righteous over-much—all urge them to keep quiet, especially as such

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Shepherd of the Sea*, 126.

a custom cannot be put down by one man. Yet is not conscience to be supreme, even under such conditions?

¶ When Charles the Second went down to Winchester with the Court, the house of Dr Ken was destined to be the residence of Nell Gwynn. The good little man declared that she should not rest under his roof. He was as steady as a rock, and the intelligence was carried to the King, who said, 'Well, then, Nell must take lodgings in the city.' All the Court and divines were shocked at Dr Ken's rigid conduct, saying that he had ruined his fortune, and would never rise in the Church. Some time afterwards the bishopric of Bath and Wells became vacant. The ministers recommended some learned and pious divines, but the King answered, 'No, none of them shall have it, I assure you. What is the name of the little man at Winchester that would not let Nell Gwynn lodge at his house?' 'Dr Ken, please your Majesty.' 'Well, he shall have it then; I resolved that he should have the first bishopric that fell vacant, if it had been Canterbury.'[1]

The truth is, that, wherever we are, in this world where evil widely prevails fidelity to conscience must occasionally inspire what seems an unavailing protest against the practice of the majority. But we must see to it on such occasions that a real principle is at stake, and that we are not moved by mere desire for self-assertion, or by pride and obstinacy. If, however, we are consciously free from these, and bravely protest against a wrong we cannot prevent, we may at least look for the approval of Him who carried His protest against evil up to the point of death, even the death of the Cross. In thus taking up our stand against what we believe to be wrong, we may be, imperceptibly to ourselves, emboldening others, who are secretly waiting for some such lead.

2. If Joseph required bravery on the council, he needed it still more when he went into the presence of Pilate to beg the body of Jesus. The Roman procurator was a man to be dreaded by any Jew, and was just now in a suspicious and angry mood. But Joseph not only braved a repulse from him. He knew he would have to confront the far more bitter hostility of the priests. Theirs was a relentless hate, before which Peter had fallen, and Pilate himself had quailed. Yet this man Joseph, brought up though he had been in circumstances of ease, went in boldly to Pilate and deliberately ran the risk of their savage hatred, which would bring about, as he believed, not only his expulsion from office, but in all probability cruel martyrdom. It was a bold step; but no sooner did he take it than another rich man was by his side—Nicodemus by name—who also himself was one of Christ's disciples, though secretly, for fear of the Jews. The act of Joseph had more far-reaching consequences on the conduct of others than he expected.

Most heroic actions are richer in results than is expected by those who dare to do them; though the immediate effects may seem disappointing. Elijah learnt to his amazement that although all the people on Carmel had not been converted, more than seven thousand faithful men had been emboldened by his conduct. And when John plucked up courage to go right in to the palace of the High Priest, Peter, who till then had followed Jesus afar off, went in also.

Joseph discovered, as many have done since, that when he steadfastly set his face towards duty, he succeeded far better than he expected. When he went into the palace of Pilate he foresaw that he might be asked to pay an enormous ransom, for that would only be customary; or possibly his request might be scornfully refused by the procurator, who was angry with himself and with the Jews. But, doubtless to his amazement, no such thing happened. Without delay, or bartering or abuse, Pilate at once gave him leave.

A similar experience is constantly met with. It is shared by a young man who is expected to undertake some doubtful transaction, but from conscientious scruple hesitates. He fears what the result of a refusal may be, but resolves to risk it; perhaps to find that the order is not pressed, or that some new incident opens up for him a way of escape. True, God does not always deliver a conscientious man from the special danger before him, but in the forum of conscience, and before the judgment-seat of Christ, he will be righted.

¶ In Pekin, before the great anti-Christian outbreak in China, there was an official who had leanings toward the Christian faith, but he had hidden his inclination. Not that at first

[1] *Methodist Recorder*, Feb. 7, 1924.

he was in any danger of his life! For Christianity was tolerated even among officials. But feeling began to run high. Then one day this man was bidden by his superiors to telegraph orders to an inland governor to murder all the missionaries in his province. And he sent instead instructions to protect the missionaries and the Christians. He knew the danger he was running. He knew that he would soon be found out and be put to death. And he was.[1]

> Ask thy lone soul what laws are plain to thee,
> Thee, and no other; stand or fall by them![2]

3. There are crises in the experience of every one when the whole future is determined; and such a crisis came to Joseph of Arimathæa. He had been for some time a disciple of Jesus, but had never avowed the fact. But after standing on Calvary and seeing the death of his Lord, sorrow, shame, and indignation so stirred him, that at once he went in boldly unto Pilate. It was the turning-point in his history, when obedience to God-given impulse decided his whole destiny. The spiritual influences which play upon our souls are not even in their flow. There are times when one is strangely moved, although in outward environment there is little to account for it. The sermon listened to may be illiterate, the hymn sung may be destitute of poetic beauty, the friendly word may be spoken by a social inferior—yet one of these sometimes suffices as the channel of Divine power, which shakes the soul to its very depths. Sometimes the sorrow of leaving home for the first time, or the death of a dearly-loved friend, has sufficed to arouse the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' We must beware of allowing such opportunities for decisive action to slip away unimproved. When a vessel has grounded at the harbour-bar, she must wait till the tide lifts her, or she will not reach a safe anchorage; but when the tide does flow in, no sane man will let the chance go by, lest a storm should rise and wreck her within reach of home.

It is noteworthy that Joseph was moved to decision and confession by the crucifixion of the Lord; for this might have been expected to seal his lips. It would seem to have been easier to follow the great Teacher when listening crowds gathered round Him, and multitudes were being healed of whatsoever diseases they had, than to acknowledge loyalty to Him when He was crucified as a malefactor. Yet it was from the Cross that this man went into the Church. The light came to him when darkness seemed deepest. This was one of the earliest triumphs of the Cross in which Paul gloried, and of Him who died thereon—dying for us all, that we who live should not henceforth live unto ourselves but unto Him. In the presence of that memorable scene we are called on for more than admiration or adoration, even for a passionate devotion to Him who gave Himself up for us all.

[1] J. Dinwoodie.
[2] R. Browning, *A Camel-driver*.

Difficulties Removed

Luke xxiv. 2.—'And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.'

For these three women—Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome—Jesus was dead. It was all over with them. The dream that had broken into their lives and changed them was gone, and all they had left was a memory which would never die. His living, loving spirit was gone, except what they had caught of it in their hearts, like an imperishable flower. But there was something still that they could do—they could cherish His memory. So off they set, as soon as the sun had risen. It did not seem to occur to them till they were nearly there that at the mouth of the grave was a great stone which would need to be rolled away. Suddenly it struck them. 'Who will roll away the stone?' For a moment they were at a standstill; it was a staggering thought. But, in spite of the obstacle that pulled them up, they went on. They went on in face of the impossible thing. They went on, and when they came to the sepulchre they looked, and they found that the stone was rolled away. In the supreme moments of life they fare best who trust their hearts. When our reason and our vision have taken us as far as they can take us, our instincts, our unreasoned faith, must lead us onward into the light. Two things strike us in this beautiful story, throwing their light upon our way.

The first is that *these women were obeying the impulse of love and faith.* They were doing

what looked like a foolish thing. They had forgotten about the great stone that stood between them and the achievement of their loving purpose. If only they had thought, if only they had used their reason and planned the thing out, what then? They might never have gone to the sepulchre, and for once, at least, their reasoning would have been wrong. There are times when you can be sure cold reason is no guide. It is a good servant when we bring it to the support and the understanding of those sacred impulses of the heart. But when the heart speaks, and faith and love and adoration and a great loyalty are leading us to some deed of service or some belief, then to disobey at the dictates of what we call reason or logic is to stultify our souls, and to miss the greatest experiences and achievements of life. Love saw no stone, and love was right—the stone was rolled away.

The other thing is that *God was working there in the darkness* of that sepulchre, and that was why the stone was rolled away. God in Christ was working at the other side of the difficulty, unseen but active. The two things which go to make a miracle were going on together—their loyalty and God's power and love. Jesus Christ whom they sought had risen from the dead. That is the kind of thing which is always happening. Christ was seeking them as they were seeking Him. These two activities were part of one process, as they always are. Every act of faith and love is but a link in a chain which is a movement of God's purpose of love. And the impossible happens: the prison is shattered, the paralysis is gone, the mountain is removed, the stone is rolled away.

Now this story is more than a story. It is a parable, and it has a message for our life. It suggests to us that every impulse of faith or love, or what we call duty, is something in which God is involved, and if there are difficulties in the path and impossibilities, God will see to them if only we will go on. That is a great principle to hold in our minds in face of what we call the difficulties that stand in the way. Some of the obstacles are only imaginary, or in part imaginary. The women said among themselves, 'Who shall roll us away the stone?' They discussed the situation, and they might have gone on discussing it until the evening shadows fell, and the question would have grown no easier. The moral difficulty of life does not yield to argument. It only yields to action. Oh, these stones! What a fruitful topic of conversation they afford us! We proceed theoretically to locate them and measure them and weigh them—and then we never come to them. They are not there. 'When they came to the sepulchre they saw that the stone was rolled away.'

¶ It was Lord Beaconsfield who used to say that the people of this country suffered far more from the fear of evils that never came than from actual evils.

There are difficulties, however, which are real enough, and they beset us all. That is the nature of our life. It is a fight, a struggle. We progress by the very process of overcoming difficulties. Obstacles, for a man of faith and love on the way of his impulse, are often the sign-posts on the road God means him to travel. They point the way of progress. They may be the indications of some discovery or some victory which God is calling us to make or to win. They give us something by the very act of facing them, a new element in experience, a new power by which we shall be the more able to enjoy and to use the fruits of victory.

Did not these women win something by that blind adventure of faith and love with which they faced the sealed tomb, which made them more worthy of the friendship of Jesus Christ? Or take David Livingstone. At the beginning of his career his work lay in the southern part of Africa. To the north stretched the great Kalahari desert, which no man had ever crossed. They told him it was impossible, but his heart called him that way, and he went, and he got through. But did not this very struggle to get through give Livingstone something—a courage, an experience, which enabled him to face other things, and to overcome the debasing, degrading, cruel conditions among the swamps and the forests? God means to give us something in the getting through, and God means us to get through. There is the other truth, that God is working behind the difficulty. If we have a difficulty which has the look of an impossibility let us face it! Never mind the stone or who will roll it away! God is working there, and there is a larger experience waiting for us.

We live in a universe that responds only to faith and love. The real treasures of the world

are all behind locked doors, of which there are no other keys but these. That is the meaning of the Cross. There was a stone in the way of God's friendship with us, the stone of man's blindness and hardness, and how did He meet it? Not by standing back and waiting, but by a great adventure of love, which is the Cross, whereby the stone that seals the spirit of man in the prison-house of its own blindness is met and rolled away in a great repentance.

We can imagine some of the difficulties the Prodigal would conjure up as he travelled back those weary miles to his father's house. Was there not always bound to be that barrier between him and his father—that he had grieved and hurt him? His own sense of shame would be an obstacle to the old intimacy. Would his father refuse to see him? But, when he got home at last, and looked in his father's face, he saw that that stone had been rolled away. There was no longer any doubt and distrust.

¶ 'Has God indeed a tender and patient thought of me, the frail creature He has made?' says Benson in *From a College Window*. 'I do not doubt it. I look up among the star-sown spaces, and the old aspiration rises in my heart. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him that I might come even into His presence!" How would I go, like a tired and sorrowful child to his father's knee, to be comforted and encouraged, in perfect trust and love, to be raised in His arms, to be held to His heart. He would but look in my face, and I should understand, without a question, without a word.'[1]

There is no other way to solve our problems of human strife and unbrotherliness but just by goodwill on the part of those who believe in God, the Father. The strife and friction of the world to-day, industrially, internationally, call for an adventure which shall bring us into the region of miracle. Nothing else will do it. There is a power which responds to our trust in one another, and to the spirit of goodwill, which is Divine. God is working there in response to our faith, in the heart of the classes and the masses, in the heart of the nations, and He is waiting to roll the stone away which blocks the path of progress and reconciliation.

¶ There is an incident in the life of William Penn, the Quaker, which has been repeated time and again. He went to America in a great adventure of love, and founded the colony of Pennsylvania. There he built the capital, which is called Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. His first task was to subdue the Indians, whose opposition was the stone that lay in the path of progress and freedom. He was told he would have to conquer them, and he made up his mind to conquer them in his own way. So he went out, unarmed, and met the chiefs, to the amazement of all his advisers. And the miracle happened. A bond was made that was never broken.

Love calls us to a still greater adventure, the adventure which will bring us the friendship of Jesus Christ. There are many to whom the living friendship of Christ means nothing. We may be listening to the reasoning of our own mind and it tells us that it is absurd to think we can get into touch with an unseen and eternal spirit. Or we may be listening to the scepticism which says that the story of the Resurrection is a fairy tale, and that Jesus lies dead 'in some lone Syrian tomb.' Or we may have built up some system of thought about the world which has no place in it for the risen Jesus, though the thought of the finest minds to-day in the region of philosophy is opening its windows to the air of faith in a spiritual interpretation of life. But if we long for the experience, there is a way into it for every honest mind. It is the way that these women took. They followed the pathway of adoration and love. There is the pathway for us into that same experience. We begin by a reverence for Christ. We begin with seeing the wonder of His life. As for Him, He is buried in a book, and the centuries roll between. He is merely the greatest Master of life whom the world has produced, the most radiant spirit among the sons of men. But to know more of Him, to become familiar with His life and His spirit, go on seeking to understand Him better, to be loyal to His message, to catch His spirit! And as you go, this book which seems to imprison Him will become like a grave which gives up its dead. Only let us trust the instinct of our own love and reverence, and follow where it leads, which is to Jesus Christ—for that is where love and reverence always end before long. Go on to seek, go on to follow, go on to trust, and the stone will be rolled away!

[1] A. Alexander, *By Sun and Candle-light*, 76.

For the living spirit of Christ is working in the world into which He came. God is out in the world seeking for men, as Christ was out in the garden seeking for Mary and the rest who came trembling to do Him honour. It is He who works the miracle of this fellowship—He whose own Spirit has put in our heart the love and adoration by which we will not let Him go, and He and we are bound together.

Only unspeakable love,
Only the love divine,
Finding response in mine,
Lifteth above.

Faith is a risk. It is an adventure. It is a kind of folly. 'Who will roll away the stone?' Never mind the logic and the voice of reason for the moment: get the experience! Reason will find a place for it. Go on, and you will find that the stone is rolled away.

Resting on the Past

Luke xxiv. 5.—'Why seek ye the living among the dead?'

1. The first Easter Day found the disciples facing the past. They dared not look into the future. And we who know the story need not be surprised when we think of what those last two or three years had been to them. When we remember how they had come to know Jesus, how in coming to know Him they had gained new hopes, new convictions, new insights, new ideals, a new allegiance, when we remember how they were able to look back and say, 'We hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel,' and then, suddenly—for they had been blind and deaf to all warning—suddenly the end had come, and all was over, as it seemed, we need not be surprised that they were facing the past. And then on that first Easter Day—when they were thinking that they must return each man to his old life, and one man go back to his fishing, and another to his collecting of the tolls, and they must all try as quickly as they might to forget all the high hopes that had seemed likely to change their lives—then there came to them the message that all was not over after all. They had seen Christ dying on the cross, but that was not the end. He lived, they were told, He lived still, He lives for ever. He is still in touch with men to guide, to strengthen, to inspire. And gradually day by day they learned that the message was true. They ceased to think of the Living One as dead, and in that faith they went forth, and we know that they transformed the world.

2. It is a common mistake to look backwards to find God, to be unable to recognize great spiritual realities in the present. Men do it still; they have always done it. We speak with confidence of the

God of our fathers, known of old,

but we speak with somewhat less confidence when we pray

Lord God of hosts, be with us yet.

And if we think of one or two times of great crisis in the history of the Hebrew people we shall see how often it happened that it was this message, that God was the God of the present, that had to be brought to them to strengthen them in their faith. Think of that time when they lay grovelling and hopeless under the dominion of Egypt, and Moses comes to them with a message of hope. What is it that he says? He comes in the name of the God who is not the God of the past, but the God of the present. 'I Am,' he says, 'I Am hath sent me unto you.' Or we look at a later time when the prophets of the Hebrew race were marked out from other men chiefly by this, that they were the men who believed that God was not the God of the past, but the God of the present. And we remember how that great man Elijah hardly ever came forward to speak to his fellow countrymen without telling them that 'the Lord God liveth and before him I stand.' And again in the time of our Lord's life upon earth, when, as you remember, some of those in Jerusalem came to try and catch Him by questions about the meaning of the Resurrection, He answered with words that recalled the old story in Genesis, and the keynote of His argument—although the point was not quite the same—the keynote turned on the fact that He could say of God, as He said, 'I Am,' not 'I was,' but 'I Am.' 'I am the God not of the dead but of the living.'

3. And so to us as to the Hebrews, as to the Sadducees, as to the disciples, the friends of Jesus, there comes the warning against merely looking back and thinking that the meaning of Christ could be exhausted by the past. Experience is a living thing, it grows, it moves, and if we seek to understand it, to interpret it, to relate it to its environment, to take it up into our religion, we must be prepared to find sometimes that the interpretations of the past are not adequate, for development and movement are essential characteristics of life. New circumstances may need new solutions and new explanations. And to rest in the past, to rest in the past alone, is to be dead and not alive.

¶ It is frequently necessary to reinterpret our principles of conduct to meet changing conditions. The Christian ideals of Paul's day prompted him to teach that women must keep silence in the churches, but the Christian conscience of to-day does not find it necessary to perpetuate that regulation. It emphatically repudiates it. Paul's Christian viewpoint permitted him, tacitly at least, to support the institution of human slavery and to send back a runaway slave, Onesimus, to his master, Philemon. On the contrary, the Christian viewpoint of Northern citizens sixty years ago prompted them to a radically different course. In the name of Christ they helped the runaway slave to get away and keep away from his master.

The Christian sentiment of America only a few years ago permitted some men to defend the liquor traffic by quotations from Scripture—surely the last resort of an evil cause. The Christian sentiment of America in this year of our Lord, 1926, is determined that the liquor traffic is a criminal outlaw and must remain such. A century ago the Christian employer of labour satisfied himself by an attitude of generous condescension and paternal care for his employees. But the Christian employer of to-day is prompted by the ideals of Jesus to re-examine his attitude toward his employees and to substitute justice, fair play, and the spirit of brotherly co-operation for paternal generosity.

One more example, very pertinent at this present moment. The Christian conscience of the Middle Ages permitted kings and emperors to invent causes for war if they did not have one ready at hand. For no better cause than to avenge a slight insult or satisfy some personal spite, armies of artisans and farmers who had no quarrel with each other were compelled to blow the souls out of one another. To-day the Christian conscience of the world is prompting us with renewed and determined vigour to exhaust every means of eliminating war and to devise other and more reasonable methods of settling disputes.

All this indicates how certainly the inner light of a growing Christian conscience is for ever reinterpreting and applying the principles of our Lord's teaching as we find them embodied in the Gospels.[1]

We may illustrate in reference to the whole system of Christian doctrine. Doctrine, as we know, is the attempt to explain and to understand the experience of life in the light of the Christian faith. And our interpretations must take account of the background of the environment, of our thought and experience. And yet when we remember how the background, the environment, changes, how it includes the knowledge which grows and grows, we see how one explanation may not serve the generation which follows. Take, for example, the explanations which have been given of the relation of God to the world in creation; how completely the environment has been altered by the one change which made men cease to think of the earth as the centre of the universe and to think of it as merely a small particle of a mighty whole. God's relation to the world is the fact which lives through all explanation, but the explanation of that fact, the way in which it is understood, the way in which it links itself to other parts of our thought—that changes, that is altered, on account of the growth of human knowledge.

And so we must be ready to revise, to think out again, if need be, to restate the great facts which live. And if we find that one man here and one man there is helped by restatement to himself and restatement, it may be, to the world of some of those great facts, the ways of understanding Incarnation, Atonement, Sacrament, Prayer, we shall not be distressed, but we shall know that it means that that man is determined not to search for the living among the dead, and not to keep his eyes and his ears, like those of the early disciples of Jesus, fixed only on the past.

[1] L. H. Bugbee, *Christ To-day*, 74.

There are problems—problems which confront the Church—of other sorts than problems of doctrine; problems of policy, of organization, of practical life, and we pray to God that problems will always confront the Church. Easter comes to warn us against that rigid attitude of determination to be bound by precedent which comes so often along with the decay of things. And those who view the niceties of the Christian faith in this way will, perhaps, be surprised to find how often they are in complete agreement with the wisdom of the past. But it makes all the difference whether you agree with the wisdom of the past because it is still wisdom or because it is past. It is exactly the difference between the faith in a living God and the seeking for the living among the dead.

Let us, then, grasp this message of Easter, the message that those who live only with their minds in the past cannot know the reality of the Living Christ; that the experience of the present teaches about God, and that through it we must know God if we are to know Him at all. Let us take our stand with Moses who says to his countrymen, 'I Am hath sent me unto you.' Let us take our stand with Elijah, who dared to confront a hostile people and a contemptuous king and queen in the faith that 'the Lord God liveth and before him we stand.' Let us take our place with that seer of the Revelation to whom the great words were spoken, 'I am the living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore.'

The Easter Message

Luke xxiv. 6.—'He is not here, but is risen.'

CHRISTIANITY is an historical religion, and it stands or falls by the alleged fact that God entered history in the human being Jesus Christ who, at a given period and on the scene of this earth, was born and lived and died and came alive again.

Let us make the attempt to think ourselves back into the atmosphere and the happenings of the first Easter Day. To appreciate the Apostles' insistence on the Resurrection as the central fact of Christian faith, it is necessary to try to have some clear idea as to what actually happened, and as to the effect of that happening on the minds of the first disciples. We can hardly imagine a more depressed and discouraged group of men than the disciples were after the Crucifixion. They were like an army, routed in irretrievable disaster, in which the panic passion lays hold of every one to escape and hide himself. Everything was shattered—their faith in God, their faith in Christ, the dream which had awakened in the company of Christ. They had lost everything. Yet in a few days we find them compact, united, strong, exultant, facing the world with a message which rang through the city like a trumpet, and they went out to bid sick men arise and lame men walk. As a writer in the *Times Literary Supplement* put it: 'These few days made such a change in the minds and the power of a handful of Jews that in a few decades they had planted their faith all over the Roman Empire.' How are we to account for the difference? Something must have happened big enough to alter their whole outlook towards the past and the future. It will not do merely to dismiss the Resurrection because it is a miracle, for this change is a miracle just as great. Is it not best just to let the disciples tell their own story? Listen, for instance, to Peter. He describes the change that came over them as a rebirth. These men had been reborn. 'Blessed be God who hath begotten us again unto a living hope.' What was this Divine act which had requickened their souls into hope and power? It was the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The risen Christ had wrought the miracle. He had come back and renewed the love and faith which the Crucifixion had stamped out.

Let us think of this experience and ask more particularly how it was that their hope had been rekindled. The basis of this hope is a vision of God, a message about God. And it was just here first of all that the disciples had lost their hope when Jesus died. Before Christ came, the Jewish nation had had a great hope in God. That was the very core of their religion, God was going to visit them and redeem them. The Messiah was to come and restore the kingdom to Israel, as they put it, and it was in this faith in God they had rallied to His standard. Day after day they watched for it, utterly trusting Him. But it was not an earthly kingdom He had come to set up, but a spiritual kingdom, in which men's

hearts would be won by love—not coerced by force or fear. That was the germ of His teaching on the Mount. In spite of all He could do, however, the hearts of these disciples could not quite take it in. They were too full of old ideas. Their hope was too hard set in the old mould of a militant Messiah, ruling from a throne, to take in the vision of a suffering Saviour, ruling by love and winning men by His grace. As He went on His way, and the storm clouds gathered, and resentment and hatred rolled up from the angry world to burst on Him in the Cross, He told them what would happen, but they could not take it in. They went on with Him towards Jerusalem, still hoping that in some way God would break in and show His power. And nothing happened. Bit by bit on that awful road with the cloud still gathering they followed Him, right through Gethsemane, where they were dazed with the mystery of it all, and on to Calvary, where the storm finally burst, in what seemed to them irretrievable disaster. And still God did nothing. Can we not understand it? Have we not said the same thing when some calamity broke upon us, and some wild outburst of cruelty or vice threatened to sweep away the little house of faith in which we had dwelt so happily, and showed us the dangerous world in which we live?

We can see their hope oozing away till it was gone and all was utterly dark. The face of God was covered with a pall of gloom. The Cross had challenged their faith and it broke; it was a question for which they had no answer. Calvary was the end of everything for them. Then came the Resurrection—Christ rose from the dead. Now on the road, now in the Garden, now in the Upper Room at Jerusalem, now by the Sea of Galilee, to some in one way and to some in another, the great fact dawned on the minds of these men and women until it illuminated and irradiated the whole of life, the fact that the Jesus whom they loved was really and truly still alive and with them. It would be well for us to-day to understand the religious outlook and experience of the first Christians. Evidently their spiritual experience was most deeply affected by this fact of the Resurrection.

Two things happened. It gave them back their faith in God's goodness and in His government of the world; and it meant a new faith in the unseen and eternal.

1. *Their confidence in God was restored.* Think for a moment how the Crucifixion must have affected their religious conceptions, far and above the agonizing personal loss of a dearly loved and deeply revered master and friend. After three years spent in Jesus' company, they may not have attained what we should call any very definite doctrinal or theological conclusion about Him. They realized that He was wholly and utterly good; they had seen Him wield a power over men and over Nature greater than anything they had ever dreamed of. They recognized, too, that there was a link and relationship between Him and the eternal God of a kind and degree greater than anything in ordinary human experience. And the keener minds among them had at any rate begun to recognize that all this was not accidental; they felt that in Jesus, God in heaven was Himself deliberately doing something on earth, that their master was in fact Messiah, God's sent one. Just when they were reaching these conclusions and were beginning to understand what the Christ might be and do, for their nation and for the world, His life and work are abruptly terminated by a hideous death. When that happened they must inevitably have felt that the moral foundations of the world were sagging.

¶ A traveller tells of two men on the Pyrenees overtaken by a furious storm. Their tent was blown away, stones were dislodged about them, and as they crouched on the ground one asked the other: 'Is this the end of the world?' 'No,' replied the more experienced traveller, 'this is how the day dawns on the Pyrenees.'[1]

Then came the happenings of that first Easter Day, and they had their faith given back to them. They found after all that goodness had not been defeated, that God had not abdicated. Their Easter experiences did far more than restore their old instinctive belief in God's government of the world. It gave them an altogether new conception of possible ways in which that which is apparently evil may be made to serve the purposes of goodness and truth and love.

2. The Resurrection meant *a new faith in the unseen and the eternal.* That friendship between Jesus of Nazareth and the faithful little group who left all and followed Him is one of the most

[1] T. H. Davies, *The Inner Circle*, 303.

beautiful stories ever told—too beautiful indeed to have been invented. Gradually He, His thoughts and His plans, had come to dominate their whole horizon. They had loved Him with a love which far outran their understanding of Him. Then the thing most dreaded descended upon them, mercilessly, relentlessly, and their friend was killed. Must not this be the end of the best thing their life had ever known—this warm and intimate fellowship with One who summed up in Himself all their highest thoughts of man and of God?

'Joy cometh in the morning.' As the darkness flees away before the rising sun, their gloom was pierced by the light that shone from the open sepulchre. Christ is risen!

One point specially should be noticed. It is that the Resurrection meant for Christ's disciples much more than a mere survival of the old friendship. They entered into an altogether new relationship. The real, final, satisfying intimacy must now be spiritual, dependent on no present sense impressions nor on mere past and earthly memories. It was a fellowship altogether transformed—made available for all mankind.

In the old Evangelical vocabulary of religious experience there is a word which deserves to survive, and that is the word 'assurance.' A man who has 'assurance' has got beyond a religion of guesses and subjective hopes; his faith has rock beneath it, and he is more sure of God and of Christ than of anything he can see and handle on this visible earth.

Jesus! We fall with all the ponderous weight
Of thought, grief, conscience, not upon the film
Of subtlest reasonings, nor the shifting cloud
Of partial hopes ideal, but direct
On Thee and on that sepulchre of Thine,
Once shut, for ever open, life's true gate.[1]

Religion to-day needs more of this Easter certainty. Christians are missing their birthright if they are not sure of God, and know next to nothing of the radiantly happy daily companionship of Jesus Christ. Such a religion can only be given to the world by men who can say 'I know.'

¶ Mr E. S. Woods says,[2] 'I remember hearing a story of the crossing of a frozen river in the wilds of Canada. A traveller on foot came to its shore. He was on an urgent errand and in great haste to reach the other side; to attempt to get to a bridge would have meant days of further travelling. He was unacquainted with that river or that part of the country, and, it being early in the winter season, he did not know how thick the ice was and whether it would bear. After tentative efforts to gauge its thickness and strength he at last in much trepidation crawled carefully across. While he sat on the farther bank, relieved at his safe passage, he saw a man driving a sleigh filled with a heavy load drive up on the bank he had left and without a moment's hesitation whip up his team and cross the ice, sleigh and all. The first man had to guess at the strength of the ice; the second man was secure in the knowledge that the ice would bear any load he could put upon it. In effective service for the Kingdom of God, there is all the difference in the world between the man who regards religion as a doubtful but just possible way of crawling to safety, and the man who knows it will bear, and is meant to bear, any weight you put upon it.'

[1] H. C. G. Moule.
[2] In *Easter Sermons*, 178.

Fact and Fiction

Luke xxiv. 11.—'And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.'

1. In his book on *Jesus in the Experience of Men*, Dr Glover has a sentence or two in which he sums up the kind of questions which the man of to-day cannot avoid asking about all the early stories which have come down to us of the Resurrection of Jesus. He writes as follows: 'We have to consider the Resurrection of Christ side by side with what we are coming to know of the facts of Psychology, and we have to be as sure of our Psychology as of the Christian story. We have to consider the tricks which the mind plays upon itself and the part of the physical nature in suggesting them and joining in the play. We have to ask whether the disciples were not just at that stage of culture when the mind fails to realize it is playing such tricks; and whether we must say that Christ did not rise again from the dead, but that certain psychopathic temperaments thought that He did and suggested it to others.' In writing such words Dr Glover is merely

putting into very frank speech thoughts which must have passed through most of our minds. We have wondered at one time or another how far we can accept these stories about the Resurrection of Jesus, how much is substantial fact, and how much must be allowed for the strained minds of the disciples. An earlier generation of religious people would have regarded the very raising of the question with horror. But we are, after all, in a more honest and in a wiser mood to-day, though we may be less inclined to an absolute faith. For Psychology, among many other things which it is teaching, tells us that to repress a question when it rises in the mind is to force it underground into the regions of the unconscious, and that a problem so dealt with may work infinitely more mischief than if it were frankly stated and faced.

Do not let us be afraid, then, of bringing Dr Glover's inquiries into the light of open examination. Do the stories of the Resurrection look as though they had arisen in the way that Dr Glover suggests they might have arisen?

Start out upon that line of inquiry and the first result is very striking and not without a flavour of irony. What the modern man with a taste for Psychology is saying about all the Resurrection stories the disciples themselves said about the first ones. They were the first sceptics. With one assent they dismissed the whole thing as a delusion.

Go further still, and you will find that there were degrees of doubt in that little company. Peter and John saw enough at once to convince them. Thomas was evidently not present and would not accept second-hand testimony, but in the end Thomas too was convinced. What is the impression we receive from that aspect of the record? Do we not feel that there was at first a body of convinced opposition to any illusory hopes, but that the growing strength of the evidence overcame any reluctance and doubt?

2. Now we are not going to try to diminish the difficulties which stand in the way of belief. If we analyze the Resurrection stories and try to fit them into a connected and coherent picture of what happened, we find discrepancies. But beyond these divergences as to details, and far more weighty and important, is the fact that something extraordinary must have happened to change these men from their fear-stricken state of mind into some of the most determined and resolute enthusiasts that history can show. What was it that happened? Could it have been anything less than an overwhelming demonstration that Jesus was still alive? Remember that they started from utter scepticism, and the kind of scepticism which starts from a hope once disappointed is far more difficult to deal with than the mere perplexity of the intellect. Would men in that mood be easily convinced? Would they fall into the snare of little deceptions and illusions of the mind? Take Mr H. G. Wells' account of the Resurrection as given in his *Outline of History*:—

'The souls of the disciples were plunged for a time into utter darkness. Then presently came a whisper among them, and stories, rather discrepant stories, that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb in which it had been placed, and that first one and then another had seen Him alive. Soon they were consoling themselves with the conviction that He had risen from the dead, that He had shown Himself to many, and that He had ascended visibly into heaven.'

Now the supposition of that passage is that the stories about the Resurrection were whispers and tales easily accepted by credulous people only too anxious to console themselves for a loss which seemed irreparable. That is not a judgment given in the historical spirit. It entirely ignores the fact that these disciples said about the first stories of the Resurrection exactly what Mr Wells says about all of them. If Mr Wells was in doubt about what actually happened, it would have been more in the spirit of history to have drawn a picture of these men as the Cross left them and then as they were found a few days later, and to leave the explanation of that extraordinary change as beyond our power to give. But to suggest that such a turn of events depended upon a few whispers and the instinct to find consolation, is to imply that the greatest things in human life can grow out of little cherished illusions without any foundation in truth.

¶ Renan tells us that at the moment when Muhammad expired, Omar rushed from the tent, sword in hand, and declared that he would hew down any one who should dare to say that

the prophet was no more. 'Heroes,' says Renan, 'do not die.' But the great French critic is not so ingenuous as he seems. He omits the conclusion of the story. The tumult occasioned by Omar's announcement was at once stilled by the calm voice of Abu Bekr, who also came forth from the death-chamber of the prophet and spoke these decisive words: 'Whoso hath worshipped Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad is dead; but whoso hath worshipped God, that the Lord liveth, and doth not die.' Are we to deny to the early Christians and the writers of the New Testament an honesty thus conspicuously displayed by a Muhammadan? [1]

3. That is the historical background of the Resurrection faith. Of course that historical background does not in itself give us a personal faith. No man comes to any vital faith in the Resurrection merely on the strength of evidence drawn from nineteen centuries ago. But in spite of that we must remember that if history in itself cannot give us faith, faith cannot live for long unsupported by history. There are many people who say that Christ rose again who have no living experience of His presence and power to-day. But there are none who deny that Christ rose again who have anything to tell us of His present work. The historical evidence is like the opening of a door. We may say that the door is open without knowing anything of what can be found on the other side, but we must believe that the door is open in order to go up to it and pass through and begin the discoveries. Let us remember then, in thinking of the historical side, that the assurance 'He is not here; he is risen' is more than a mere assertion; it is an invitation. It is one thing to believe that Christ must have revealed Himself to His disciples as living, and another thing to know His Presence for ourselves. But the one thing is the invitation to find the other. Ever since those first days the supreme note of the gospel which has been preached in every nation is that there is a living Saviour to answer the great needs of the soul, a Love strong and deep enough to die for men, but gloriously alive and wonderfully near.

¶ How Dr Dale of Birmingham came to write *The Living Christ*—so he said—was in this way. He was writing an Easter sermon, and when half-way through, the thought of the risen Lord broke in upon him as it had never done before. 'Christ is alive,' I said to myself; alive! and then I paused:—alive! and then I paused again; alive! Can that really be true? living as really as I myself am? I got up and walked about repeating 'Christ is living!' 'Christ is living!' At first it seemed strange and hardly true, but at last it came upon me as a burst of sudden glory; yes, Christ is living. It was to me a new discovery. I thought that all along I had believed it; but not until that moment did I feel sure about it. I then said, 'My people shall know it; I shall preach about it again and again until they believe it as I do now.' [1]

4. This rekindled hope which was born of a new vision of God's love flung its beams into every region of the disciples' life, and so it does for us to-day.

(1) *It lit up*, for one thing, *the region of their personal lives* where they struggled with failure and temptation for the prize of character. Before the Cross they had broken down hopelessly in loyalty and courage. They all forsook Him and fled. They felt they could hardly lift their heads again. And just when they were down and out, and on the point of giving up this high way of life as an impossible dream, He came back to them and revealed to them a love which was supreme and victorious over all failure—a love in whose presence there is no final defeat for the soul, and through whose forgiveness and persistence the broken strands of will are reknit into power and the fatal weakness of the flesh is finally conquered and swept clean away. The whole region of our moral struggle is lit with hope. That is the great thing to know. The fight for character is not a hopeless battle in the presence of the living Christ. The recreant weakness which betrays us to our downfall and humbling, like a faulty muscle when the strain comes on, need not remain to trip us up. The love that endured the rough handling of evil, even to the death, survives to conquer evil in the hearts of men and lift them through His friendship into His likeness. Here is a gospel for sin-baffled men.

(2) And this hope *lights up the whole region of our sacrifices for others and for the Kingdom.* There is nothing surer than that the way of service will demand its price. There will be

[1] J. Waddell, *The Life Here and the Life Hereafter*, 182.

[1] A. W. W. Dale, *The Life of R. W. Dale*, 642.

many a defeat to face in which it seems that all our efforts are baffled and we have to spend our strength in vain. The religion of service is a land of lost causes. It is filled with the graves of many an apparent defeat. Think of the men who have given their lives for Jesus Christ without producing any effect worth speaking about so far as we can see. Read the story of any great foreign missionary enterprise. It is a long catalogue, especially at first, of lives laid down and money spent in what the world calls a gigantic waste of power. Even Christ seemed to make far more enemies than He made friends. So far as we can gather from a reading of the Gospels, if we stop at the Cross, He did little more than rouse the heart of evil to a storm of fury, in which He was overwhelmed. So it is always. And there are hours of darkness when the better world, which is the Kingdom of God, seems a forlorn dream. But then comes the Resurrection; and the meaning of it is the assurance of victory in death, yea, even by means of death. Out of the grave springs life. Out of sacrifice comes power. Every life laid down is a life set free. Every defeat of love is the method of its victory. Lift up your hearts!

> Thus hath He unto death His beauty given,
> And so of all which form inheriteth,
> The fall doth pass the rise in worth—
> For birth hath in itself the germ of death,
> And death hath in itself the germ of life.

(3) And that hope *lit up the future*—the country beyond the shadows of death. How dark it was till Jesus came! How the grave shut out the far horizons. If they believed in that realm at all it was only a dim 'perhaps,' and the thought of its uncertain hazard filled the mind with fears. But His rising changed all that. It is true that Lazarus was raised from the dead as the story tells. But at the best there was a mighty difference between the rising of Lazarus and the rising of Christ. Lazarus had come back from the other world, back to this life, back to the life of time. But Christ had crossed over and was living the risen life here among them. He was manifesting in their very midst the eternal life, stripped from the limitations of time. He revealed in power and beauty what a great thinker calls 'the beyond that is within.' They saw Him clad in the radiance of the other country and they saw that it is no realm of shadows, but a new kind of life, victorious, free, and perfect in love. From that moment the shadows were gone from the future. 'Blessed be God, who hath begotten us again unto a living hope to an inheritance incorruptible and that fadeth not away.'

There is no other way to get this living hope, this assurance that quickens all the springs of our being, but the disciples' way. It is to see Jesus conqueror over death, to get a vision of that deathless love before which sin and the grave are powerless—no stronger, indeed, than the sheath that binds the daffodil bulb, or the earth which imprisons it. To see that love is the only way to be sure. To meet the risen Christ in the deeps of our being where He has power to come into touch with us, that is the experience which quickens hope. Nothing else will do it. We may have beautiful images drawn from Nature to express it. 'Beyond that cypress tree there is always the sky,' says an Eastern proverb. It is beautiful and suggestive. Beyond the weeping willows there is the far horizon. The sun that sets when those we love are passing is rising for them in some other country where begins the new morning. The spirit that took its rise in this world has sought the sunlight of another land to ripen it, like a rose which strays across the wall to seek the sun it needs. It is all beautiful. But can you say it till you have seen Jesus? Can you believe it till you have met Him in the garden where is a grave? Can you be sure of that new day till the Easter morning has dawned for you with the advent of Christ into your life here and now? That faith He stands waiting to give us, waiting till we fling down the shutters of doubt and fear, and open our heart to Him like Thomas, saying, 'My Lord, and my God.'

The Road to Emmaus

Luke xxiv. 13.—'Two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus.'

Of all the appearances of the risen Christ, none has a stronger hold upon Christendom than this one. It has brought light to many darkened hearts, and comfort to innumerable souls. Christ revealed Himself to Mary in the garden, and

that will always be precious to the Church. He revealed Himself to the eleven, and to Thomas, and to Peter and John beside the sea of Galilee. But this meeting on the Emmaus road, with its revelation of the living Saviour, is engraven on the universal heart.

Who these two were we cannot tell. We know nothing about them except the name of one of them, and we are not at liberty to associate that name *Cleophas* with the *Klopas* who is mentioned in the Gospels. That they were not of the eleven disciples is certain, for it was to the eleven that they hurried with their news. They were clearly on intimate terms with the Apostles, for they knew where they lodged when they went straight to them. But beyond that we know nothing of the men. It is characteristic of the Lord that in the glory of His resurrection-life He gave Himself with such fullness of disclosure to those unknown and undistinguished men. Here is the Master of all those obscure lives that are yet precious in the sight of heaven. Had these two travellers been John and Peter, we might have hesitated to take home their rich experience, but being what they were, they are our brothers.

1. Let us try to understand the state of mind of these two travellers.

(1) In the first place this is notable, that *they had lost their hopes*. There was a time, not so long ago, when their hopes had been burning brightly like a star. They trusted this was He who should redeem Israel—that was the glowing conviction of their hearts. And as they followed Jesus in His public ministry, and saw His miracles, and heard His words, brighter and ever brighter grew the hope that this was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Even the Cross itself had not dispelled their hopes, for they remembered that He had talked of that. They remembered that He had said, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again.' But now the third day's sun was near to setting, and darkness was soon to fall upon the world, and a great darkness, heavier than sunset, was beginning to cast its shadow on their hearts. They would never see Him again, nor hear His words, nor follow Him through any village street. And so that evening, journeying to Emmaus, they were men convinced that they had lost their Lord, and having lost Him they had lost their hopes.

(2) Then in the next place this is notable, that *they had lost their gladness*. So long as Jesus Christ had been alive, there had been a great gladness in their hearts. Always in His society there was delight. There was a feeling of peace and of security. When He was with them all their care and worry took to itself wings and fled away. But now their Lord has passed beyond their ken, and it was like the passing of the sunshine for them, and as they walked together they were sad. Now sadness is of many kinds. There is the sadness which the exile feels when he is far away from home and kindred, and when in the thronging of the crowd around him he catches no glimpse of a familiar face. There is the sadness which the aged feel, when they remember happy days now gone for ever; and there is the sadness of the open grave. All these are elements of our mortality, but there is a spiritual sadness different from these, and the cause of it is an absent Lord. When in prayer the heavens seem as brass, when the Bible loses its fragrance and its dew, when spiritual books begin to pall on us, when the services of the House of God become a weariness, then is the heart of the true disciple sad. Then does one feel as if Jesus had not risen, and as if all one's hopes in Him had been a mockery. Then do men cry the exceeding bitter cry, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.'

¶ The English philosopher Clifford, when he had lost his religious faith, wrote: 'I have seen the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven upon a soulless earth, and I have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion was dead.'

(3) There is one thing more that is notable, and it is this, that *they had lost none of their desire*. That afternoon, walking to Emmaus, their talk was all of the Lord Jesus Christ. And from a hint in the original we learn that their talk was animated, intense, and eager. They were talking loudly, as Orientals do, and the words were being flung one to the other, for out of the fullness of the heart the mouth was speaking. They never understood how much they needed Him until the day when they thought that He was gone. They never understood how much they loved Him till the shadow of parting had fallen on their love. But now they knew it, and so, that dreary day, their talk as they journeyed was all of Jesus

Christ, and the deepest desire of their hearts was this: O that I knew where I might find Him!

My faith burns low, my hope burns low,
Only my heart's desire cries out in me,
By the great thunder of its want and woe
Cries out for Thee.

2. Such then was the spiritual condition of these men, and now we want to know how Jesus dealt with them. We want to follow the successive stages by which He gave them back their joy and peace.

(1) In the first place, *He showed them the supreme necessity of His death.* 'Ought not Christ,' He said, 'to have suffered these things, that so he might enter into glory?' We may take it for certain that these two disciples had never really grasped the need that Christ should die. That He whom they loved should die a felon's death was something too awful to believe. And when it happened it seemed a hideous and irreparable calamity. And then Christ met them, and spoke about His death, and they learned that the Crucifixion was no accident. It was no longer the greatest of calamities; it became the greatest of necessities. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?—and they saw its moral and spiritual grandeur, and it dawned upon them that the Cross they loathed was something more wonderful than any crown. It was *then* that their hearts began to burn within them, and the light to break upon their darkened souls.

(2) The next step our Saviour took was *to lead them back to the Word of God.* 'Beginning at Moses and at all the prophets, he expounded unto them the things concerning himself.' Once again they heard of the Paschal Lamb, and of the Brazen Serpent in the wilderness, and of the smitten shepherd in Zechariah, and of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. But hearing it all interpreted by Christ, the Bible became a living book to them, and in the hour when it became a living book, they found that Christ Himself was by their side.

One of the surest signs that Christ is nigh is when He makes the Bible live again. It is a living Christ who makes a living Scripture, and when He is going to reveal Himself to us, passages that we have known since we were children begin once more to live and burn for us. If Christ be absent, then all the lore of ages will never make the Word a living book. If Christ be dead for us, in heart and conscience, then is the Bible always a dead book. But when old texts take a strange grip of us, when they haunt us through the market and the street, when we cannot silence some gracious invitation, when we cannot shake off some oracle of warning, when promises come like music to our ear in days of despondency or hours of peril, when some great text that we have long ignored reaches out its loving hands to us—when *that* happens to a man, the risen Saviour is not far away.

¶ It is Christ alone who can interpret the Scriptures. No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost, neither can any man, save by the Holy Ghost, say that the Scripture is the Word of God. Human judgment may discern a rare loveliness in the character of Christ, and the excellency of Scripture in many of its parts appeals to a critical judgment. But the Divinity is otherwise discerned. The disciples at Emmaus knew before all was done that it was the Lion of the tribe of Judah who had prevailed to open the book.[1]

(3) And then *He revealed Himself in the breaking of the bread.* It was in no sense a sacramental meal, as we use that word sacrament in our theology. It was a frugal supper in a village home of two tired travellers, and another. Yet it was then—in the breaking of the bread, and not in any vision of resurrection splendour—that they knew that their companion was the Lord. How that discovery flashed upon their hearts, the Bible, so wonderful in its silences, does not tell. It may have been the quiet air of majesty with which He took at once the place of host, when they had invited Him in to be their guest. It may have been the familiar word of blessing that awakened sweet memories of Galilean days. Or it may have been that as He put forth His hand after the blessing to take the bread and break it, they saw that it was a hand which had been pierced. However it was, whether by word or hand, they felt irresistibly that this was He.

In daily life we are always meeting that—the revelation of the insignificant. A certain trick of speech—a tone, a look—and some one whom we have lost is at our side again. So when a man has spiritually lost his Saviour,

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll.

and is being restored to the joy of his first love, it is often thus that the Lord reveals Himself. Our commonest mercies come to gleam on us as the most wonderful of all created things. Our sicknesses, our trials, our disappointments, are all transfigured with a Father's love. Until at last, though we have seen no vision, and have only had common meals and common mercies, we too are thrilled and say, 'It is the Lord.'

The Unrecognized Christ

Luke xxiv. 16, 31.—'Their eyes were holden that they should not know him . . . their eyes were opened, and they knew him.'

1. The two who went to Emmaus were disciples of the Lord. They had known Him in the course of His earthly ministry. They had followed Him, had heard His words, had witnessed His gracious deeds, and had been impressed with the weight of His great personality. They had shared the hopes of the time when He seemed to be accepted of the people. They had felt the depression of His unpopularity. They trusted that He was the Redeemer of Israel. But on them fell the darkness and the doubt of the time of His betrayal, arrest, crucifixion, and death. They could trust no longer. He was dead, and their hopes lay buried in His grave. In their time of darkness, doubt, and despair they had waited, and now it was the third day since hopelessness fell on them. They go forth on a Sabbath-day's journey to Emmaus. Perhaps they went forth to have an uninterrupted talk on all the things which had happened and on the fact of their own despair. They communed together and reasoned on all the things which had happened, and 'Jesus drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.' Why?

(1) In the first place, *their minds were occupied with themselves*, with the bitterness of their disappointment, and with the feeling which comes from thwarted hope. They could think of nothing else than the greatness of their former hope and the bitterness of their present state. Their minds were preoccupied. So they talked together of all those things which had happened. So preoccupied were they that they scarcely noticed Jesus when He drew near and walked with them. 'What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk?' 'Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?' 'What things?' 'Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.' This is their story, and it really explains why their eyes were holden.

Yet they might have been prepared for the events which had happened had they read their Bible rightly. For they had a Bible. They had the Old Testament, which was the great inheritance of their nation. But, as the Apostle Paul says elsewhere, when they read the Old Testament a veil was over their minds. As we read it to-day, the Old Testament seems to have as its central meaning, embodied in song, in sacrifice, in story, and in prophecy, the great theme of the Redeemer who suffered for men, and all lines of the Old Testament seem to converge towards the suffering Servant of Jehovah. In a word, the Old Testament moves onwards towards Christ. It is a striking fact that this conception of the Messiah was at that time in the mind of Jesus alone. No Jew had thought of the Messiah in those terms. The Messianic ideas of the time were altogether on a different plane and directed towards another kind of figure. The kingdom of the Messiah was thought of in the terms of Israel's kingdom in the days of David and of Solomon. Israel's kingdom was to be universal, and her dominion was to be from sea to sea, and the nations were to be in subjection to Israel. The dominion, too, was irrespective of the moral or spiritual character of Israel. Israel, and Israel's kingdom, depended only on the relation of Israel

to Abraham. As we read the Messianic hopes of Israel, and follow the kind of expectations which they cherished, we find that they were all couched in material images, and limited to temporal forms. In fact, the Messianic conception of the Jews and the conception of the Messiah embodied in the Gospels have nothing in common but the name.

The two disciples were like their neighbours, lived in the same world, breathed the same atmosphere, and shared the same hopes. A temporal kingdom, and one of outward power and glory, was what they expected. Hence the great catastrophe of the death of Jesus came on them with overwhelming force. For the thoughts of suffering and death had never in their minds been associated with the thought of the Messiah. Yet when they were able to read the Old Testament from the new point of view, they were able to see that they might have expect just what had happened.

(2) In the second place, *they had resisted the teaching of the Lord Himself.* The Gospels record the fact that from the day of Cæsarea-Philippi onwards the Lord spoke to them of what was to befall Him in Jerusalem. Again and again He told them in unmistakable terms of the great catastrophe, and, often as they heard these warnings, yet they did not receive or understand them. Nay, on the night on which He was betrayed, and at the supper table, they were thinking of the kingdom, and were anxious as to the particular place and office they were to occupy in that kingdom. No wonder that the catastrophe found them unprepared, and that their trust failed and their hopes were crushed. They had resisted the meaning of the Old Testament, they had refused to listen to the warnings of their Lord, and now, when these words of His had come true, they were amazed, horrified, paralysed, and broken down.

(3) In the third place, *they had refused to regard the evidence* which was beginning to accumulate *that their hopes might yet be realized.* They proceed to tell of certain things which had happened after the three days had come and gone. They tell of the women who had amazed them, having been early at the tomb. These women had gone to the tomb to complete the work interrupted by the coming of the Sabbath day, and they found an empty sepulchre. They came back to tell that they found not His body, that they had seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. Surely it might have been well had they inquired into the truth of the women's story. But their minds were preoccupied, and their eyes were holden, so that the possible truth of the story could not enter into their minds.

(4) In the fourth place, *they did not give any credit to the confirmation of the story of the women* brought to them by certain of them who had gone to the tomb, and had found it even so as the women had said. No accumulation of evidence, no amount of proof, could have made any impression on them in their then state of mind. One might almost say that they were resolved to be miserable. They would not even inquire into the possibility of the truth of the story. It could not be true. So they resisted the evidence of the women, and the confirmation of that evidence by those who had gone to verify it. The final word of their story to the Master was this: 'him they saw not.'

'Him they saw not.' And it is to Him they say it. It is to Him they speak, with Him they walk, with Him they are keeping step, and it is to Him they tell their mournful story, not without a feeling of complacency at their own consistent attitude of mind. 'Their eyes were holden, and they did not know him.'

2. Let us trace the process by which their eyes were opened and they came to know Him.

The Lord allows them to tell their story. There is a relief in being allowed to set forth in order the causes of our misery. The telling of it lifts us out of it while we are speaking of it. We become less self-involved while we tell it. We so far forget ourselves and our misery, and cease to admire our own sorrow and our greatness in being able to bear it. So they tell their story. And immediately they are overwhelmed, surprised, shocked out of their selfish misery by the words which their unknown companion speaks to them. They had prided themselves on their hard-headedness and their demand for evidence, and they were told that they were foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets had spoken. It was a surprising and startling thing to them. To be told that they were foolish men when they were regarding themselves as supremely wise was startling; to be told that the causes of their misery lay not in the facts themselves

but in their slowness of heart to believe was something of a shock to them. Let us note, however, our Lord's way of dealing with them. It is His way still. He sent them back to read their Bible, the Bible which they might have known, but of which, though it had been within their reach so long, they had known so little. 'Beginning from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.'

The record of God's love and striving was written in the Old Testament, and the two disciples learned the inner meaning of it as they never saw it before. They learned that the Messiah was in the Old Testament, but was in it precisely in those features of it which they had never thought of as belonging to the Messiah. They looked with new eyes on the things concerning Himself which Jesus unrolled before them. The sacrifices of the Old Testament took on a new meaning as they were seen to point forward to the perfect sacrifice. The pain and misery of man obtained a deeper meaning, for they were seen in the light of the supreme agony of Gethsemane and the Cross. The tenderness and love of God were realized more clearly as they saw them in the great Gift of the Eternal Son for the welfare of man. The Old Testament was seen in a new light, and was luminous with the presence of the Son of God. Thus He taught them to find Him in the Old Testament, and so prepared them to recognize Him in the scenes of their daily life.

It is His way still. He teaches us to recognize Him in the Scriptures. He enables us to see Him both in the Old Testament and in the New, to know His ways, to recognize His methods of work, to appreciate His manner of manifesting Himself, and then we find Him in all our life. We learn to know Him in His Word, and then we are able to know Him in the joys and sorrows, in the work and leisure of our common life. But perhaps the greatest effect of His opening of the Scriptures to these two disciples lay in the fact that He had made them interested in something else than themselves. As He spoke to them they became interested in the ways of God in His redemption of man; they saw more clearly, they realized more fully, the immeasurable love of God for man; their hearts burned within them as hope began once more to gleam on their horizon, and they were interested in the great fact of the Divine revelation. They utterly forgot themselves in the vision opened up to them.

Slowly along the rugged pathway walked
Two sadden'd wayfarers, bent on one quest;
With them another, who had asked to share
Their travel since they left the city walls;
Their converse too intent for speed; and oft,
Where linger'd on the rocks the sunset tints,
They check'd their footsteps, careless of the hour
And waning light and heavy falling dews.
For from the Stranger's lips came words that burn'd
And lit the altar fuel on their hearts
Consuming fear, and quickening faith at once.
God's oracles grew luminous as He spoke,
And all along the ages good from ill
And light from darkness sprang as day from night.
We, too,
Are weary travellers on life's rough path.
And Thou art still unchangeably the same.
Come, Lord, to us, and let us walk with Thee:
Come and unfold the words of heavenly life,
Till our souls burn within us, and the day
Breaks, and the Day-star rises in our hearts.
Yea, Lord, abide with us, rending the veil
Which hides Thee from the loving eye of faith,
Dwell with us to the world's end evermore,
Until Thou callest us to dwell with Thee.[1]

The journey came to an end; they had reached the place to which they had intended to come. The journey had been short since Jesus had travelled with them. He made as though He would have gone farther. They pressed Him to abide with them, and He consented. And it came to pass, when He had sat down with them to meat, suddenly the guest became the host, and He took the bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them, and their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. The recognition of Him explained much to them. It explained the strange experience, the slow lifting of the burden of sorrow, the kindling enthusiasm with which they had listened to His talk, and they said one to another, 'Was not our heart burning within us as he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures?' Their experience while He was with them was now explained. They had recognized the Master, and they were glad.

[1] E. H. Bickersteth.

¶ When the essayist Hazlitt was a young man at home, his mind was dull and his faculties unawakened. But in one of those charming essays that he calls 'Wintersloe,' he narrates how the poet Coleridge came to see his father, and young Hazlitt walked several miles home with him. Hazlitt tells, in his own eager and eloquent way, all that the walk with Coleridge meant for him. It quickened his intellect, gave him a new world, put a new radiance into the sunset for him, and a new note into the song of every bird. His heart began to burn, and it was not the talk that did it; it was the poet who was behind the talk.[1]

Hath not thy heart within thee burned
  At evening's calm and holy hour,
As if its inmost depths discerned
  The presence of a loftier power?

Hast thou not heard 'mid forest glades
  While ancient rivers murmured by,
A voice from forth the eternal shades,
  That spake a present Deity?

And as, upon the sacred page,
  Thine eye in rapt attention turned
O'er records of a holier age,
  Hath not thy heart within thee burned?

It was the voice of God, that spake
  In silence to thy silent heart;
And bade each worthier thought awake,
  And every dream of earth depart.

Voice of our God, O yet be near!
  In low, sweet accents, whisper peace;
Direct us on our pathway here;
  Then bid in heaven our wanderings cease.[2]

And now that gladness has come, they feel that they must share their gladness with the other disciples. The man who has been blessed of Christ longs to communicate that blessing to other people. So they rose up without delay that same hour, and returned to Jerusalem. The two were eager to tell their story and to share their gladness with the others, but the eleven were quite as eager to tell their story, and they also had a story to tell. The eleven, remembering the condition of mind in which the two were when they had left them, cried out as they saw them: 'The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon.' The Lord had cared for the eleven as He had cared for the two. Then the two had the opportunity to tell their story, and how He was known of them in the breaking of bread. The two and the eleven thus shared their experiences together, to the profit of both and to their further gladness. For an experience of Christ is not for him alone who has received it. It is meant for all His disciples. What the eleven had seen and what the two had seen are for all the people of God. Thus it ought to be to-day, and those who meet the Lord are to tell to others what their experience has been, so that the experience of each may be the common good of all.

¶ Personal testimony and personal service for Christ have always been among the most efficient weapons in the hands of the Church. This is as true in modern as it was in ancient days. The whole career of John Williams, the martyr of Erromanga, was changed because a woman met him in the street and invited him to a place of worship. One day Ira David Sankey drove out from London to Epping Forest. A shock-headed boy climbed up one of the wheels of the carriage, and with wondering and longing eyes gazed on the stranger. He rested his hand lovingly on the lad and expressed the hope that some day he would preach the gospel. Years afterwards, when he was old and frail and blind, and just before he entered the Homeland, the evangelist was almost choked with joy when Gipsy Smith told him that he was the boy in the glades of Epping Forest on whose shaggy head Sankey had laid his prophetic hand.[1]

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, 141.
[2] S. G. Bulfinch.

Some Better Thing

Luke xxiv. 21.—'We hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel' (R.V.).

1. *The Lost Hope.*—'We hoped that it was he.' So these two men spoke—in the past tense—wistfully, sadly, broken-heartedly. They were so sure the centuries of waiting were over, that this was really He at last, but it had all come to nothing. What struck Christ was their sadness. That, surely, in itself was a sign of

[1] W. Wakinshaw, *The Vow of Ruth*, 142.

bigness. It was because the visions they had seen were so splendid that now that they were out it had grown so grossly dark; because, had it been true, life would have been so glorious, that now it seemed so mean and cramped and petty. Other people did not care. There was the usual crowd at the corners, life went on, women sang cheerily as usual, children played, the masses moved about their daily affairs. What did it matter to them that Christ hung dead, or was to be hustled into a convict's grave? But these two could not forget, or get their minds to think of other things; their hopes were dashed, their hearts were darkened. And has not Carlyle taught us that our sorrow is 'an inverted image of our greatness'?

These men had not idly cherished a hope; they had proved in the only way possible how real it was; they had left all to follow it. The following of Jesus was no side-issue in their lives. It was everything. They were not like so many who confess to an interest in religion. Jesus was everything to them. Their hope in Him was linked in their minds with all the history of their race. They had seen one highway running through the troubled history of their nation, and the way led to its deliverance and redemption and resurrection. God was pledged to that. To doubt it was to doubt God. He must redeem Israel; but when? How? In their hour of insight they had been led by the Spirit to stake all this national hope upon Jesus. He who had saved Israel from Egypt and from Babylon had called them in Jesus to the long-awaited and long-deferred hour. They were the heirs of all the past. The King was among them. 'But he is dead!'

What did the Cross mean to such disciples? They had followed Jesus in 'morning sunshine and in faithful hope.' Since He had failed, what was left to them? The attempt to understand the despair of the disciples only brings us back once more to the meaning of the Resurrection in its amazing glory.

In reading the story of Jesus we used to lay much stress upon His moral teaching; we said truly that we were saved by His life; and we turned with some impatience from the theology of St Paul and from his emphasis upon the Cross and the Resurrection. We thought it possible to recover a human Jesus, whose name and sanction we could claim for our social reform, and for the building, out of earthly material, of the Kingdom of God. Men trusted that He—the Ethical Teacher, the Mystic, the Social Reformer—would be the Redeemer. But had it not been for His death and rising again we should never have heard of Him. It is ours to sit at His feet, because in His death He caused to die all early and faulty hopes, all imperfect ideals of a national Saviour, all the earth-bound dreams of His people; and in His resurrection led them into a land of promise, where we dwell to-day.

The Christian Church was never built upon a common understanding by certain men and women of a new ethical standard. Its first-born members had passed through the heart-searching, 'heart-shattering' experience of the Cross with the crushing of hope and the end of a great cause. They had unlearned much; they had been brought, without expecting it, into a new experience of Jesus. He whom they had made to suit in some way the hopes and dreams of Israel had been crucified. We think of the death of Jesus as the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven to all mankind. But none the less it was also the failure of the national Jesus and of the hope which many had cherished. Once for all He escaped from the bonds which men had made for Him. We, too, try to fit Christ into our schemes, but He eludes them. He it is who kills our hope, but it is only to quicken another and better. Old things pass away, all becomes new.

2. *The New Life.*—This is always God's way with men: out of dead hopes the new life springs. His method is written clearly for us in the story of Israel. Through a prolonged succession of disappointments and failures Israel's way led to Christ. They did not blink the fact that here and there they had been disappointed, but they were not cowed or beaten. A new spirit of expectancy always arose and listened confidently for His footsteps. The prophets, said A. B. Davidson, were terribly 'one-ideaed people'; and that idea was that 'always God is going to do something.' They had many disappointments; that day of the Lord, for which they watched, proved curiously elusive, and delayed in the most unexpected fashion. If we can manage this invasion it will come, Isaiah thought, and yet it did not, not in its fullness; if this Babylonian tangle could be straightened, Jeremiah said, that

would bring it in; yet later generations would not accept that it came then; it is here now, is at the very door, shouts Zephaniah; but those after him kept looking forward to something still to be. 'My eyes are growing blind,' a psalmist confesses, watching for God: yet, he adds doggedly, 'God will come.'

It was a tragic doom to be the people of God. He seemed to give them failure after failure. And the experience of the two disciples who had set their hopes on Jesus was in line with all the past. The Jesus round whom they had built their national hopes and traditions had to die in order that a larger hope might be born.

God always gives us something better than we expect. He is not untrue to His promises. On the other hand, He fulfils them in a higher and deeper sense than we could ever expect them to be fulfilled. He always provides 'some better thing' for us. Before He left them Jesus promised to return to His disciples. He did not return in the way He was expected—in bodily form. He came in a better way—in His Spirit. The historical Jesus was taken away from the world, but the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit were (so to speak) given in His place. God always gives something better than He takes away. The march from earlier illusions does not leave us poorer; it always leaves us richer. The new reality that is reached is always more satisfying than that which is displaced.

God has yet much truth to reveal to us. The little truth we know is not the whole of truth. The boy at school works at his lessons so that he may win a prize. But is the gaining of a prize the purpose of his education? We all know it is not. The real reward he gets is not the reward he works for. It is greater, deeper, more permanent. So God allures us by placing before us those things which appeal to us. But that which we think will satisfy us we come to see, as our experience deepens, to be altogether insufficient to meet our needs. We work for a livelihood; but is the earning of a livelihood the real purpose of work? No; it is the developing of a character. What we are is of greater importance than what we have. Our character is of greater value than our possessions.

¶ F. W. Robertson says, 'We work for a mean, low, sensual happiness, but all the while He is leading us on to a spiritual blessedness—unfathomably deep. This is the life of faith. . . . Nothing here is disappointing if rightly understood.'

When we are feeling perplexed or disappointed as we look at Christ and then at our own life, or at what we know He means this world to be and what it is, then it is that Jesus comes to us, as He did to the two disciples. As He talked to them by the way their difficulties vanished, and they found that their dreams were true. What had stumbled them? Here were they crushed and broken, and the thing was true! 'We hoped,' they said, and they were right! And if only we can come upon Jesus Christ, and indeed He is not far from any one of us, we too will find that our big dreams are true, our instincts after what seems too good to grow real not foolish but God-given. Look, cries Christ, holding up the promises, what God is sure you can become and do! Look, how much more splendid are God's plans than our own most audacious faith, which is only a wan reflection of His great realities!

Is it a dream?
Nay, but the lack of it the dream,
And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,
And all the world a dream.

He Must Needs Suffer

Luke xxiv. 26.—'Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory' (R.V.).

THERE is more in this conversation on the road to Emmaus than at first meets the eye. Cleopas and his friend may well be taken as types, and while they speak for themselves they speak also for multitudes of men and women since their day. They had shared the opinion of many other Jews in their time that Jesus of Nazareth might be the Messiah. They had at least hoped that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel, and the news of His trial, condemnation, and death had come upon them as a shock. Their hopes were dashed to the ground. They could no longer believe in Jesus as the Christ. The Cross was an offence to them. And it is an offence that never ceases. The mystery of the sacrifice of Jesus continually blinds men's eyes. The secret of the salvation which is in Jesus is continually evading us—we find it hard to conform our ideas to God's.

Here, then, is the question before us, not a riddle for our solution, but a deep and solemn challenge to our better selves, a call to believe in the absolute fitness and justice of God's way with men in Jesus Christ His Son—Was there not a moral obligation upon Him to suffer?

In order fairly to discuss the question we must be quite clear as to what it was that Jesus Christ came into the world to do. Students of mankind tell us that, roughly speaking, three stages may be distinguished in the history of human progress: (1) the stage of barbarism, when the body is cultivated; (2) the stage of civilization, when the mind is cultivated; (3) the stage of religion, when the soul is cultivated. Now, the coming of Jesus marks the dominance of this last stage. He has to do with the soul first, and opens to men that larger life which we call spiritual. True, He profoundly affects the physical and intellectual life, and His teaching has its social and moral aspects; but that is because He goes first to the root of the matter, and touches man at the core and centre of his being.

And the work of Jesus with the human soul was not merely to educate, but to save it. If we are content to take Him at His word, and to share His conception of the task that lay before Him, we shall know that He could not have come as a radiant angel or a messenger of joy; but that the stern warfare He had to wage demanded another guise, demanded that He should be straitened until it was accomplished. To Himself the secret of His whole career lay in the words, 'Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?'

In the past the most successful attempts to explain the necessity for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ have been those which have treated it as a matter of legal right and obligation. Under this aspect the truth has often taken powerful hold of the minds of Christians and has proved effective in their experience. The fruit of it has been a stern and rigid system of belief and mode of conduct that has often acted like healthy leaven in society, and proved those who held the doctrine to be the salt of the earth. And even now we cannot but acknowledge the essential truth and fitness of this position, though the forensic language in which it has been clothed is to our ears pedantic and unreal. What men need to do to-day is still to accept the moral and judicial necessity for the sufferings and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but no longer to express it in legal phraseology, but in terms of the spiritual life.

1. In seeking to do this, let us look at the sufferings of Jesus, first, in the light of His relation to men. There is no name more characteristic of Him, and none which He Himself more frequently used, than the title 'Son of Man.' Jesus never anywhere explains this name, but as we study sympathetically His use of it, we cannot miss the deep undercurrent of its meaning. It signifies His solidarity with the race, and it gives to His humanity a representative and, if you will, a vicarious character. But there is more in it than this. It means that He stood frankly for the human race, and identified Himself with outraged human interests. His relation with men was not in any sense official, but one of simple human fellowship. And the aim of this fellowship was apparent. It was that He might raise men to His own level, lift them above the miserable contradictions of the flesh and the spirit, change the discord of their being into harmony, and help them to share His nature and His life. As the Son of Man Jesus set before the world a lofty and still unattained ideal. His life gave practical expression to a doctrine of humanity such as few philanthropists have ever reached. He made it possible for every sufferer to say:

> This fleshly robe the Lord did wear:
> This watch the Lord did keep:
> These burdens sore the Lord did bear:
> These tears the Lord did weep.

And because He suffered He was forced by the folly and prejudice of the day to share the lot of those for whom and with whom He stood.

When we realize the sense of a unique relationship with mankind which lay upon Jesus, sometimes as a burden, sometimes as a holy joy, and when we add to this His nature, sensitive beyond the common and quick to know what was in man, we may well believe that the spectacle of human sin and misery which met Him at every turn here on earth made no small part of the cup of bitterness He had to drink.

¶ John Woolman, the Quaker, enters in his journal: 'I felt the depth and extent of the misery of my fellow-creatures separated from the divine harmony, and it was greater

than I could bear, and I was crushed down under it.'

All woes of all men sat upon Thy soul,
And all their wrongs were heavy on Thy head;
With all their wounds Thy heart was pierced and bled,
And in Thy spirit as in a mourning scroll
The world's huge sorrows were inscribed by roll,
All theirs on earth who serve and faint for bread,
All banished men's, all theirs in prison dead.

It may be that this formed only part of His suffering, and that it did not necessarily exhaust His love; but we shall never realize what that love involved until we see that it was sympathy with human woes and needs which led Christ to share them. For we cannot read the Gospels carefully without understanding that there is indicated in them a certain unknown, mysterious element in His sufferings. Apart from the last agony, His lot was not a specially hard one. True, He was despised and rejected of those He came to save, and He knew the meaning of poverty and toil. But in this experience there was nothing unique, nothing to account for the burden that He evidently bore. This arose —partly, at least—from His sense of oneness with men and from the grave responsibility which that involved. To Him it meant, from the first, sacrifice. He could never escape the sound of human sorrow.

¶ The Cross, as I looked at it more and more intently, became to me the revelation of a loving and a suffering God. I learnt to look upon the sacrifice of the death of Christ, not only as being the all-sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, *but also as the everlasting witness to God's sympathy with man.* The mystery of the Cross did not, it is true, *explain* any one of the enigmas connected with our mortal existence and destiny, but it linked itself in my spirit with them all. It was itself an enigma flung down by God alongside the sorrowful problem of human life, the confession of Omnipotence itself to some stern reality of misery and wrong.[1]

2. But there was more in His suffering than this. The moral necessity laid on Jesus Christ cut deeper still. If there is any meaning in words we have His own testimony for so saying; and we are bound to ask further, What was the work, and what were the conditions which made this submission to suffering necessary? What more was behind it than a mere moral impression and the sacrifice of a natural love? We can gather some hint of the answer to the question from the words 'and to enter into his glory.' He was not content until He should have finished the work of saving men from their sins. This was what He came to do, and it was for doing this that He needs must suffer.

Now we must ask ourselves here to look at the whole matter as with the eyes of Christ, from the standpoint of the love of God.

The great mass of the religious ceremonies of the world have had for their object the quieting of conscience, the winning by some strange device of that peace and pardon for which the instinct of man has ever told him no price was too great to pay. The ritual and sacrifice which play so large a part in all the religions of the world simply shadow forth the long-drawn agony of the human conscience, the passionate desire to escape the stain and consequences of sin. Now, in speaking of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we generally seek to explain it from the side of God. It is the outcome of God's grace; He willed it so; it was the work of His good pleasure. That is true, but there is another side to the picture. We must not forget that it is demanded also by the conscience of man. The 'needs must' in the suffering of Jesus means that nothing short of this could satisfy the clamant needs of man's moral and spiritual nature. Given a real and keen sense of sin, man knows that forgiveness is no child's play. To say that God forgives weakly, as one who would hush the matter up and say no more about it, is to attribute to Him what has been called the '"asses" milk of human kindness.' In our heart of hearts we have nothing but contempt for action such as this, and, what is more, we know that it does not and can not satisfy our need. Conscience is, above all things, inexorably just. It is a commonplace to say that men will always be more severe with themselves than they are with one another. We pay no small tribute to the real grandeur of our human nature when we say that a man who is in his right mind will never receive forgiveness and the remission of his fault till full restitution

[1] Dora Greenwell.

has been made. And, for all we may say to the contrary, man feels this most keenly where God is concerned. He is not content to think that his forgiveness comes spontaneously when he has paid his price, or made his prayer, as though the universe were an automatic machine. And the one difference between Christianity and all other religions is that, while they make man pay the whole price for his wrongdoing, in Christianity the price is paid by God.

In the past man has made almost superhuman efforts to atone for wrong done and guilt incurred. He has not even hesitated to give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul. And for all that he has not won peace, and the story of his struggle for it is a long wail of despair. Now, he has still to pay. The consequences of sin are not to be escaped; it can still wreck bodies and blight lives, and wreak ineffaceable mischief, but it need not kill the soul. The last agony of it is removed, and the crushing sense of guilt, the burden of conscience, the quenching of hope, once inevitable, are no longer necessary. The reason for this is not that man's quest has succeeded at last, but that God has taken His place and achieved the impossible for him. And this, again, completes the answer to the question: 'Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?'

The Word of God

Luke xxiv. 27.—'Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.'

A MODERN novelist has described the presence of a Greek Testament in the room of a man tempted to his undoing. How often does the mere presence of the Divine Word make itself felt till the Book becomes no more a Thing but a Person. A glance at it, and though time and custom and sin have checked the old feelings, they are at once unsealed. The volume is not dumb. It speaks, appeals, warns, solicits, in the voice that floated along our dreams in childhood. It takes on an aspect sometimes terrible, as when it gleams like the flashing of a shield, sometimes tender, as if it carried in it all the loving remonstrance of the past. The tendency to pass into personality characterizes things that greatly command us. Wordsworth tells us that on his first visit to Switzerland, as he was hurried down the southern slope of the Alps, the woods, 'decaying never to be decayed,' the drizzling crags, the cataracts, and the clouds appeared to him no longer material things, but characters in an Apocalypse. It was by the force of this feeling that Wordsworth seemed able ultimately to transfigure and unsubstantialize the whole mass of earth.

¶ Henry Drummond used to tell of a Cambridge undergraduate whose sweetheart visited his room. She found its walls covered with pictures of actresses and racehorses. She said nothing, but, on his birthday, presented him with a picture of Christ. A year later she again called on him at Cambridge. The Thorn-crowned Face hung over the fireplace; and the other walls were adorned with charming landscapes and reproductions of famous paintings. He caught her glancing at her gift.

'It's made a great difference to the room,' he said, 'and, what's more, it's made a great difference *in me*!'[1]

Most of us have pictures whose eyes follow us, rebuking and warning where we would err, smiling and restful as we strive up the heights. So it is with books, but especially with the Word of God. We come upon it suddenly as it lies upon the table, and it meets us with almost the full shock and passion of flesh-and-blood reality.

We need not wonder at this. The New Testament is not a mere book, not a mere thing. It is the Word of God, and to the Word of God there are attributed in Scripture the most tremendous energies of personality. Let us take them as they are given in the Book of Revelation. 'And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called the Word of God. . . . And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations.' It is legitimate to apply in a measure what is written of the Personal Word to the written word, and indeed the distinction between the two may easily be drawn over sharply.

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Rubble and Roseleaves*, 234.

1. The Word of God is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. Is it not so with the New Testament? Wherever you place it, in whatever company, it is always judging and making war. Come up against it when you are meditating the great descent into the depths, and silently and suddenly you are brought face to face with God. It has eyes like a flame of fire, and knows the secret lust that has been cherished and brooded over in the heart till it is ready to break into deed. On its head are many crowns, among the rest crowns that dear hands have laid on it, hands that are folded in their long rest, hands that are busy in the toil of love. It speaks amidst the tides and counter-tides of temptation and impulse, and whatever it says, we know in our heart of hearts, is faithful and true. We may neglect its warning and be deaf to its appeal, but it will not leave us alone. In righteousness it doth judge and make war, and it will go on judging and warring till we yield it the obedience it demands.

2. 'And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood.' Always this is the clothing of the New Testament, no matter how it may be bound. It is clothed in a vesture dipped with blood, and if it were not, it would not be worth the lifting by hands that have been cut and wearied in their conflict with a world like this. Whatever is true about the New Testament, it is true that if you take from it the message of atonement, of the Garden where Love once lay bleeding, of the Cross on which the Eternal was crucified, nothing is left. The Cross is not only its heart and groundwork, but it meets you, however carelessly you look at it, even with the first sight. It is with it as with the Word Himself, there is no Christ recognizable but the Christ who has been crucified for us. Always we try to escape from the Cross, but always it rises in its clear command over earth and death and hell, the pillar of the Divine Government, the revelation of the Father's heart. No picture or rood can speak to us so plainly of the Cross of Jesus Christ as the New Testament lying quietly on the table, clothed in a vesture dipped with blood.

¶ In a famous book upon Japan there is a description of Shinto as 'the easiest religion in the world.' A pleasant shrine is hidden among leafy trees: the worshipper enters and deposits his little offering of two or three cash: he taps the gong to call the attention of the guardian spirit to what he has done; he departs—and that is all. Can any thinking being be content with a religion like that in such a world as this, so stained with blood, so riven with battle and with earthquake? It is too easy and too shallow. Agony must answer agony: deep must call to deep.[1]

¶ Dr Denney was speaking once of the tendency of some Protestants to minimize the Cross. 'If I had the choice,' said he, 'between being such an one and a Roman Catholic priest, I had rather be the priest lifting up the Cross to a dying man, and saying, "*God loved like that!*"' It was said with such a quiet intensity that it burned itself upon the mind ineffaceably.[2]

3. The Word of God goes forth to His triumph, conquering and to conquer. It makes war in righteousness and for victories, and its sword will at last smite the nations that would not be won. The triumph of God's Word is sure. The war is a long war, and it will have its vicissitudes; but at the worst the gates of hell, through which pour the legions of our spiritual foes, shall not prevail against it. We may have missed much of the meaning of the Divine, but there has been nothing to justify alarm as for the imperilled sovereignty of the Book. The new theory of the solar system did not dethrone the sun, did not rescatter the stars over the abyss of heaven. So, to the end, generation after generation will ponder over His Book, generation after generation will watch by His Cross. So it must be. He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet, and His thoughts must reign till all rebellious thoughts are subdued and disappear.

¶ James Cohen, a Russian Jew who had come under the influence of the mission work of Dr Torrance in Galilee, and had accepted Christianity, was appointed to take charge of the Bible Depôt and to act as colporteur. During the eleven years of his connection with the book-room Cohen estimated that he had sold or given away about five thousand copies of the Scriptures in twelve different languages. His experience proved that there was nothing like the Bible for opening the minds of men and women to the truth. In his eyes it wrought wonders,

[1] J. M. E. Ross, *The Tree of Healing*, 221.
[2] T. H. Walker, *Principal James Denney, D.D.*, 71.

softening the hearts of the hardest Jews, and changing their views regarding religion. 'What is that key hanging round your neck?' he asked lightly of a young Jew. 'I suppose it is the key of your treasury?' 'Yes,' was the reply; 'it is the key of the box in which I keep the New Testament you gave me.'[1]

A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic, like the sun:
It gives a light to every age;
It gives, but borrows none.[2]

As for Christian people in these times, they are so troubled about many things that they are in danger of missing the good part, which is so good because it shall never be taken away from them. They take up their time with questions of form and structure and date, to the neglect of the living spirit. If people would only read the Bible! Dr Chalmers once prayed in his divinity class that he and his students might study Scripture until the day-star arose in their hearts. What we need most of all is the transfiguration of our old way of seeking God, seeking Him in the faithful Scripture. If we take that up with boundless reverence and trust, our life will be renewed, and our tottering houses set firmly on the rock. We have been speaking of the New Testament, but there need be no fear for the Old. When Jesus had passed through the mysteries of death and resurrection, when He had faced again the glories and terrors of the spiritual universe and returned to this dim spot called earth, He took the Old Testament in His nailed hands and blessed it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, *Take, eat.* 'Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.'

Going Further

Luke xxiv. 28.—'He made as though he would have gone further.'

May we not take these words as summing up the whole of our Lord's life? Always He would have gone further. Great as were His words, mighty as were His deeds, the sense of restraint, of limitation, is ever present in the gospel story. He could not do many mighty works because of their unbelief. There was something that seemed to hem in even His omnipotence. When He wept at the grave of Lazarus, it was as if the whole flood of earthly sorrows poured over His mind at once, as if He felt how little He had done to relieve them—of how little He was to do even in calling Lazarus back. He would have gone further, and dried all tears, and righted all wrongs, and made an end of all sins and of all pains. And not only were His works limited, His words, too, were impeded. 'I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' How He must have longed to tell us the secrets of Eternity. How hard it must have been to press down His inmost and His constant thoughts. He would have gone further and spoken words far greater, more meaningful even than the deepest words of His spirit through the Apostles, but something hindered. And we know the judgment that He passed on the result of His own work. The hosannahs of the shouting multitude told Him that He had failed. His vision was unfulfilled. He had striven to make manifest the spiritual kingdom and even His disciples beside Him did not understand. They planned how they might sit, one on His right hand and the other on His left. He knew that the crowd that cried 'Hosannah' would cry 'Crucify Him,' that all would forsake Him and flee. He would have gone further into those blinded, or, at best, half-blinded natures. He knew what it had all come to, but He did not delay His resolute march to the Cross.

1. 'He would have gone further.' This is what has to be said still. It has to be said of Him and His work in the world. He has His redeemed people, His Holy Church throughout the world. But He would have taken them on with Him into regions and ranges which they have been reluctant to think were any part of His journey, and they have refused. They have refused because they could not believe that, when they themselves were comforted and brought home, He would have gone further. He would have gone on into the realm of international relationship and redeemed all that range of human affairs from its suspicions and jealousies, its selfishness, its trust in brute force. It is His right, and this is His domain as truly as any. He whom we serve in His Church would have gone further.

[1] W. P. Livingstone, *A Galilee Doctor*, 196.
[2] Cowper.

¶ The Church has not understood, and consequently has not taught, a fundamental truth of her own gospel. She has failed to realize that she is essentially a supernational fellowship: 'There cannot be Greek and Jew, barbarian, Scythian: but Christ is all, and in all.' To a company possessing so inclusive a loyalty is entrusted the duty of preventing conflicts and healing divisions. A Second Century Christian wrote to his friend, Diognetus: 'In a word, what the soul is in a body, this the Christians are in the world. The soul is spread through all the members of the body, and Christians through the divers cities of the world. The soul is enclosed in the body, and yet itself holdeth the body together; so Christians are kept in the world as in a prison-house, and yet they themselves hold the world together. So great is the office for which God hath appointed them, and which it is not lawful for them to decline.' [1]

2. 'He would have gone further.' The words are just as true when we look at the inner social conditions of our nation. The hope of its redemption from its deep and varied ills does not lie in the progress of secular education and enlightenment alone, but depends upon the adequacy of the religious spirit to meet the moral and spiritual wants of the age; in the bringing into new ranges of influence the personality of Christ and with it the spiritual ideals in which He lived and moved and had His being.

¶ 'There can be no cure,' says Frederic Harrison, 'for social and international disorders, for they arise from moral defects. The only cure is moral and spiritual regeneration. Nothing can help us, nothing can save us, but a higher moral sense, a national creed of loyalty, discipline, unselfish devotion to duty; in a word, a more efficient religion.'

Take the ideal of the Kingdom of God. Suppose every Christian man and woman and every Christian Church seeking, in downright earnest, to carry it out in all its breadth and fullness, prepared to live and die for the realization of that Kingdom of God. The result in proportion to the number of Christians would be the transformation of the whole situation. Here, too, Christ would have gone further. He will go further. But He can go further only as He takes His friends with Him and His Church through which He can work.

3. 'He would have gone further.' Christ would always take men further than they think or intend. Rarely do men see the full implications of Christ's revelation to them and in them. Luther had a new vision of God in Christ, and the Reformation recovered a vital and religious truth. What implications and applications lay in that simple idea of justification by faith alone! Some of them were seen at once. All that came between the individual soul and its Creator was swept away, and the full rights of the humblest of human beings to unrestricted communion with God through Christ were asserted. Yes, but He who taught Luther this much would have gone further. In that recovered truth of the Reformation lay hidden our modern ideas of civil liberty. From the hour when the ideas of the Reformation were affirmed and received, political liberty became inevitable, as Lord Acton has testified and shown in his 'Study of History.' Luther taught that justification by faith was the Article of a standing or falling Church. History has taught that it is also the Article of a standing or falling society.

4. 'He would have gone further.' It is true, also, in the individual Christian life. Let Christ join you on the way and He will take you further than you perhaps intended. This is the very nature of the life of Christian faith. If you give it any place, it will soon ask for itself a larger place. Sooner or later, you come to see that you will either have to go all the way, or break off. You cannot simply propose to yourself to be good so far, up to a point, and no further. For, when you get to that point, if you refuse to go on, you simply convict yourself of not having followed Christ even so far, but of having followed your own convenience. That is to say, if you refuse to go on, you convict yourself of having really never begun.

There is a story which has become a proverb—about a man who bought, because it seemed to be cheap, a new wooden door, and how that new door could not be satisfactorily disposed of until he had built an entirely new house to suit it. He first of all built the new door into the old wall; but it hurt his eyes to see it there. The old wall looked so very old, and the new

[1] H. S. Coffin, *In a Day of Social Rebuilding*, 28.

door so very new—by contrast. And not until the new door had become an integral part of a new house could the owner be at peace, feeling that now he had acted honourably by certain obscure but invincible demands of his own soul. And our Lord spake two parables, urging the same thing: the parable of the new piece of cloth sewed into an old garment which made the old garment intolerable; and the parable of the new wine in the old bottles which burst the bottles. Goodness is a living thing, having in itself something vital and personal. Let a man admit it into his life in some particular, and he soon learns that that little streak of goodness is a living, pushing thing, which he must either put out of his life, or give place to more and more.

When we speak of 'going further' in relation to the Christian life, we mean not so much 'going further on,' we mean rather going 'further in.' That is no mere play upon words. Not only does one who admits Christ to any place in his life feel compelled to admit Him into other places, but one who begins by allowing Christ to restrain or control his outward life feels sooner or later compelled to allow Christ to deal with his whole interior life, with his motives, his imagination, and all his secret business. Christ cannot save us so far, or up to a certain point. He can only save us to the uttermost. If we begin we must go all the way.

In the light of this text, then, the important thing is not how we begin the Christian life but that we indeed begin. Begin anywhere. Let Christ cut into your life anywhere, and then act honourably by His increasing demand. Let Him control your outward actions, and you will find that He has something to say about your interior and personal life. Answer His gentlest knock, and He will come in and sit down with you. Begin with Him, and you will either have to go on or you will have to end the partnership.

The Discovery of the Living Christ

Luke xxiv. 28, 29.—'And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us.'

Jesus had talked to these men by the way and had made their sad hearts burn, kindling a flame of faith where there were only the dull ashes of a smoking fire. And then a strange thing happened. When they came to their home 'he made as though he would have gone further.'

Perhaps we have never thought of that side of His character and His way with people, yet it was His habit all through. He never forced an entrance to any man's house. He never tried to intrude into any man's life. You remember that exquisite story of His day with the woman taken in sin: when Jesus was left alone with her and a confession was just trembling on her lips, He did not allow her to make it. He would not intrude, or ask any questions, or invite any confessions that might bring a blush to her cheek, when there was no need of words, for He knew, and she knew that He knew. The only house to which Jesus ever invited Himself was the house of Zacchæus. But He saw that Zacchæus was just burning to ask Him, yet dared not, and so the invitation was already there.

1. The message this story has for us is that Christ comes, and if He be not welcomed and constrained He goes. We may not recognize Him as Christ—that is the point—not just at first. There is an old saying that God comes without a bell. We may not know that we have been visited by Christ, but get behind the scenes, and the real story is that He has come, and because He was not welcomed He went.

The roseate hues of early dawn,
The brightness of the day,
The crimson of the sunset sky,
How fast they fade away!

We all know something like that in the inner life of our spirits. We have an hour when God seems near, and then somehow the moment passes and we seem to be left alone. Most people have had in their experience a time when Jesus was the biggest figure in history, the hero of heroes. We have missed our true development if we have missed that. There is a time in life when it is as natural to love Christ and to want to follow Him as it is to love our mother. But the moment may pass. Or it may be an impulse to do a kind thing to some one, but the impulse goes and we feel quite differently. Or there is an hour when our hearts are burning with the flaming miseries of other people's lives,

and then the hour passes. And though we feel we have lost something, we take it as a bit of life, and come to imagine our hearts as a kind of Æolian harp, hung out of the window for life to play upon while we give ourselves to the sterner business of life. But the question is whether the real explanation of those experiences is that Christ came and joined Himself to us on the way, and made our hearts burn for a moment as He lit up a fragment of life, or duty, or the love of God, and then He made as though to go further, and we let Him go!

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
  But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
  When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
  And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
  To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
  There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
  Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
  Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time
  That away the rest have trifled.[1]

That was Jesus' way in life, and it is His way still. That is the reason why religion seems so elusive a thing. It is because God will not force His way. Many people still cannot get past the question why God does not compel them. They seem to think that if God be a reality He will force Himself in on us in some startling and recognizable form. They do not see the truth that God cannot compel. He treats us as His friends. No one can force his way into a human heart. Faith is a thing you cannot compel. You may force a man's lips, but he becomes a hypocrite. You may dominate his mind, but then you have taken away his mind. You may compel a man's obedience, but then you have taken away his manhood. And God's great business with us is to train us into manhood, free and sincere, seeing the truth with our own eyes and claiming it with our lives, and seeing goodness for ourselves and choosing it with our own wills—there is no other way for God to take.

[1] Browning, *Cristina*.

And so the truth comes and whispers itself to our conscience, or the light dawns and gently touches our inner eye, or the love steals in and knocks at our heart's door, and if they be not laid hold of and kept as men grasp hid treasure, they go: and when they go they leave the heart more desolate than before.

¶ It is this kind of tragedy which was in the mind of Holman Hunt when he painted his picture of Christ at the door with His lamp and His gentle knocking. There is a kind of suggestion in that picture that if Christ be not admitted to that house He will by and by turn aside and go somewhere else, as has happened again and again with people and nations which have rejected Christianity. For up in the corner the artist has written in Latin, 'O do not pass Me by!'[1]

2. But we do not need to dwell on that side of the picture. Thank God, we have the assurance that God never finally leaves any man, though ears may grow so dull that His knocking cannot be heard till some stroke of circumstance shatters the house about our ears! Let us rather turn to these two disciples with the risen Christ beside them, whom they did not recognize, and see how they reached the knowledge of the great reality of His presence! The Scripture tells us that they constrained Him, saying, 'Abide with us.'

What does that suggest to us in dealing earnestly with our best moments?

(1) In the first place we *ought to recognize them for what they are*—the touch of God upon our life, the whisper of God within our souls. There are many people who have a good deal of real religious experience, though they have never recognized it for what it is, or linked it up with any thought of God. They have never seen that the Spirit who makes their hearts burn with aspiration and with compassion is the same Jesus who lived, and died, and rose again. What they need to do is just to recognize their experience for what it is, and realize that it is God with whom they have to do.

This unconscious fellowship with God, if we call it so, does not reach its full development or its full power with us till we become conscious of the real Divine source of what is moving us. If we knew it is God who comes to us in every fine moment, and not just a passing emotion

[1] J. Reid.

like a fitful wind, would it not make a world of difference? Clutton Brock says, 'To recognize the grace of God, to affirm it, is to be aware of the very scent of God, and to be drawn by it the more powerfully because we know what it is.' What a new light sprang into the world, what new meanings came into those conversations by the road, when they became aware they had been in touch with Christ in one whom they had taken for a stranger! H. G. Wells, in *God the Invisible King*, describes the experience of finding God real in words that might be used by thousands upon thousands: 'It is as if we were touched at every point by a being akin to oneself, but sympathetic beyond measure. It is like standing side by side with one whom we love deeply and trust completely. The moment may come when we are alone in the darkness under the stars, or walking along a country road, or when we sit and muse; but when it comes our lives are changed. There is no longer any doubt of God.'

(2) In the second place we *need to take Him definitely and with patience into our lives*. 'They constrained him, saying, Abide with us.' This word 'constrained,' says a great scholar, is the strongest word in the New Testament. We must take Him in: and that means effort, deliberate.

One of the main reasons why religion remains an unreality is that we miss this side of it. We think of God as waiting His chance to break into our life, once we open the door. There is a truth in this. Often it needs only a surrender on some point or other for faith to become an overwhelming experience that takes control of our life. But there is another side to it, another demand religion makes. It demands to be thought out. God needs to be sought, to be definitely brought into life. We need to think out, with the shadow of Christ upon our life, the implications of our Christianity. The love of Christ is like any other love. If it is to be real experience we need to think out its meaning and its demand upon our life in every kind of way. Those disciples took Him into the house, they constrained Him saying, 'Abide with us.'

What does it mean to take Him in? It means taking Him into the home, for one thing —into the family secrets, into the household troubles and cares, asking what He has to say or suggest. It means taking Him into the place of business. There, again, everything would come under His light and be brought to His counsel. And it means taking Him into the place of pleasure. There is nothing like a real religion for teaching a man when art is good and when it is only a cloak for an appeal to the passions. There is a kind of mirth in which people could not indulge, and jokes they could not make, when He is near. As Wesley put it, 'Whatever makes it more difficult for you to pray, or to think of God, or to hold a high moral standard, that kind of reading or amusement is wrong for you.'

In short, religion will be real only in the measure in which we face everything with the living Christ and let His light shine into it. But it will mean taking Him in, definitely thinking out life with Him. And that means effort and sacrifice. It means study and prayer, and a new examination of ways of living and acting that have become habitual, and that have never been condemned because we have tied up the work of religion to saving us from a few outstanding sins which are already under the ban of any decent public opinion. We have to let in the light into everything—old ways of thinking, and customs of every day that are so familiar that we do not realize how wrong they are. We have to take Him in, facing the problems He raises and the tasks He sets, and working them out with Him.

The solution of our problem is not merely a matter of wisdom, it is a question of power. He will not lift the burden, but He will fill our hearts with a new purpose, which will make the burden no longer a crushing load, but a kind of inspiration, a burden we carry for Him and for His world. Many things that seem hard to do, many changes that seem hard to make, become no longer difficult because He changes us. And so bit by bit He comes to fill the texture of life with new meaning, and in all its work and joy and love He stays with us, the abiding Presence, the unchanging Friend.

I know thee, Jesus, who thou art,
Jesus the dying sinner's friend:
Nor wilt thou with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end:
Thy mercies never shall remove,
Thy nature and thy name is love![1]

[1] C. Wesley.

Three Phases of the Risen Christ

Luke xxiv. 32.—'And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?'

The charm of this immortal story lies largely in the strange facility with which the supernatural comes upon us in all its mystery and majesty, literally walking and talking with the natural. To depict such a converse has been the attempt not seldom of literary genius, but where has it succeeded? Shakespeare has assuredly failed in *Hamlet*. Scott himself admits that he has failed in *The Monastery*. But St Luke succeeds. And why does St Luke succeed? Because he records a real experience: he tells a true story. Godet speaks of the 'intimate' character of these words, and well he may. Here the supernatural walks and talks with men.

The Risen Master is here portrayed as the companionable Christ, the expository Christ, and the enkindling Christ. Let us seek to catch the triple glory of this manifestation.

1. *The Companionable Christ.*—'He talked with us by the way,' cry these glad-hearted men. 'He spake to us in the way' is the rendering of the R.V. Resurrection has not quenched His sympathy. Exalted, He is tender as He was in His humiliation. He is the friendly Lord. He is the companion of His people. His heart yearns with His ancient love. Although bedewed with new glory, He comes close as ever to those His heart approves and pities.

They were sorely troubled disciples with whom Christ companied. They were all but heart-broken. Sorrow had overwhelmed them. Their hopes were buried in their Master's grave, and they knew not yet of His resurrection. They could scarcely speak; they could only sob. Their golden days were all in the past. But these sorrowing ones presently testify, 'He spake to us in the way.' Christ is most companionable to His troubled children. When we tread the way of grief, oh, how He speaks to us in the way! And if His words do not arrest our tears they alleviate them. There are roads we could not tread were it not for our loving Lord's companionship.

¶ When Robert Louis Stevenson visited the leper settlement at Molokai in 1889 he had as fellow-passengers in the boat nursing sisters going to work on the island. 'And when I found that one of them was crying, poor soul, quietly under her veil, I cried a little myself. I thought it was a sin and a shame that she should feel unhappy. I turned round to her and said something like this: "Ladies, God Himself is here to give you welcome."'[1]

2. *The Expository Christ.*—'He opened to us the scriptures.' These travellers were no strangers to the Scripture. They were Jews, and had read deeply in every book of it. The Scripture was a familiar book to them. And what did our Lord do when He met with them? He took the book they had studied all their lives, and turned to the pages that they knew so well. He led them down by the old familiar texts. And in the old He showed such a depth of meaning, and in the familiar such a wealth of love, and He so irradiated the prophetic mystery and so illumined its darkness with His light that not by what was absolutely new, but by the new interpretation of the old, their hearts began to burn within them by the way.

Does not our Saviour always act like that? He does not startle us with unexpected novelties; He touches with glory what is quite familiar. It is the familiar experiences that He explains. It is the familiar cravings that He satisfies. It is the familiar thoughts which have filled the mind since childhood that He expands into undreamed-of fullness. We have known what sin was since we were at school. Christ meets us and talks about our sin—and we learn that sin is more exceedingly sinful than we had ever thought in our most reproachful moments; we learn, too, that He died that we might be forgiven, and that there is pardon for our worst this very hour. We have known what pain was and we have known what death was, and we have known that there was a heaven and a God; but when Christ meets us as we travel by the way and talks to us of these familiar things, there is such promise and light and love about them all that everything becomes new.

¶ In times of sorrow Jesus comforts through the written Word, and by opening out the Word through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Thus on the road to Emmaus Jesus opened the

[1] *Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ii. 154.

Scriptures to the two sorrowing disciples; and as He discoursed about Himself, He caused their hearts to burn within them. And so now, God's own Word, always a treasure, becomes in times of sorrow a treasure indeed. At such seasons let us make it our special study. It throws light on so much that is dark and perplexing, and, as we read, Jesus Himself draws nigh, and speaks to us. He lightens up passages which, perhaps, we read carelessly before with a halo of glory. And as we compare passage with passage, His Spirit applies the Word and makes it to us spirit and life. Thus, through 'patience and comfort of the scriptures,' we have hope—not a vague, shadowy hope, such as those possess who know not God, but a Scriptural hope, *i.e.* a hope based on the Word of God, who cannot lie.[1]

3. *The Enkindling Christ.*—What a witness these men bear! 'They said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us?' The Companion-Expositor set their hearts aglow. 'He that is near Me is near the fire' is reputed to be a saying of the Christ's. It is assuredly true.

¶ Blaise Pascal must have been somewhere in the Emmaus latitudes on that memorable night of November 23, 1654, when he wrote in his journal the one word *Fire* to record the most memorable spiritual experience of his life, and followed it with the jotting, 'Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy,' and then with the name of Jesus Christ, written down more than once, by itself, as if it were the answer to all questions, the satisfaction of all hunger and thirst.[2]

Christ enkindled these hearts with comfort. It is the fine comment of Professor Bruce in the Expositor's Greek Testament that 'it is the heart that has been dried by trouble that burns so.' Each of these men had a heart that had been dried by trouble, but the Lord makes it glow with strong consolation. Christ uplifts us oft-times above our troubles by the burning comfort He imparts. He enkindled their hearts with joy and with hope till they knew nothing of all their former sadness. The flame of gladness enfolded their soul; the flame of hope enwrapped their spirit.

In this burning of the heart lies the great secret of Christian progress. A gospel that carries this power in its message has little need of any other aid. Muhammad conquered, but Muhammad used the sword, and without the sword he would have made little progress. And Buddha conquered—he won thousands of followers—but the message of Buddha never kindled anybody. It lulled men to rest with dreams of infinite quietude, and with the hopes of Nirvana where they should cease to feel. But there is something more inspiring than quietude—it is ardour, enthusiasm, animated feeling; and there is a better secret than a brandished sword; it is the secret of a burning heart. When a man is faced by any great endeavour, it is not more light he wants, it is more heat. Kindle his heart by any ruling passion—love, anger, indignation, pity—and he will fling himself on any obstacle. The only statesmen who ever move a country are those who can set the people's heart a-burning—and that is true of the Saviour and the world. He meets men as they travel by life's way, and for every battle you will have new equipment, and for every temptation the necessary strength, and nothing will be too hard for you to try, and nothing will be too sore for you to bear, if you can but say like these two going to Emmaus, 'Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us.'

[1] *Life Radiant: Some Memorials of the Rev. Francis Paynter, M.A.*, 170.
[2] J. M. E. Ross.

The Burning Heart

Luke xxiv. 32.—'And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?'

After the unknown Stranger had left them, the two disciples who walked to Emmaus realized that they ought to have recognized Him because He had made their hearts burn within them. Jesus Christ does not appear in visible form to us, but we can always recognize His presence by the burning heart. The infallible sign that we are in fellowship with Him is that our hearts burn within us.

1. *The Secret of the Burning Heart.*—What did these two men intend to convey when they said that their hearts burned within them? What do we mean when we say that our hearts burn as we listen to great oratory or music?

We mean that our purest and deepest emotions are aroused. The conflict that goes on within us is for the moment, at any rate, transcended. Our hearts are aglow with a love of the pure and true and good. We have a sense of inward reconciliation. The chill paralysis of indifference or uncertainty is banished from our hearts and they burn within us.

It has often been remarked that what a man says is not half so important as how he says it. The dictum may savour of cynicism, but there is an element of truth in it. The wisest sayings fail to move men unless they are winged with flame. People will always go and hear the great orator, irrespective of whether or not they agree with his opinions or believe in his message. They like to feel their hearts burn. It is a pleasurable emotional luxury. They like to have their feelings pleasantly stirred, to pass from laughter to tears and from tears to laughter. That is more than half the secret of the fascination of the drama. The orator and the actor stimulate our emotions, and for the moment, at any rate, we are on the side of the angels. We are conscious of the glow and satisfaction of inner reconciliation. We all like to feel good, whether we are good or not. And there is the peril of the burning heart. The Romans called the will-o'-the-wisp the *ignis fatuus*—the vain, the empty fire. And there is a vain fire that is often kindled in human hearts. It gives us a pleasurable glow, but it does not wither or consume the evil that is within us.

¶ Many a man's religion is emotional responsiveness without practical issue. He substitutes delight in hearing the Gospel for diligence in living it. He does not see that religion is 'action, not diction.'[1]

The influence of Jesus Christ is of another kind. He moves us both because of what He says and because it is He who says it. The fires that He kindles are not delusive flames that shine for a moment without burning, and then vanish leaving a deeper darkness than before. They are living fires that purge the heart of its dross, and make the will like tempered steel. They glow and burn so that the temperature of our holy passions and sacred enthusiasms never falls.

Why is it that Jesus Christ kindles in our hearts 'the undying fire'? It is because He brings to earth the fire of God. There is a profound truth behind the Greek myth which tells that Prometheus stole fire from heaven. The pure, ardent, aspiring flame of the spiritual life is not kindled by any earthly torch, but by the fire that descends from Heaven. H. G. Wells is echoing the experience of the generations when he says, 'This spirit in me, this fire which I call God, was lit I know not how, but as if it came from outside.' 'There burns an undying fire in the hearts of men. By that fire I live. By that I know the God of my salvation.' The Quakers have called this fire the Inward Light. In the hearts of many of us the Light has become a mere glimmer, and the fire has become a flickering spark. But 'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overpowered it.' Jesus Christ came into the world to replenish the fire, to transform the spark into a burning and a shining light.

¶ In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.[1]

2. *The Vision of the Burning Heart.*—The noblest and most enduring visions are born of the burning heart. It is often held that passion blinds men, that emotion clouds the reason. That is not true of the pure passion that Jesus Christ kindles. The man who sees farthest is he whose reason is suffused with passion.

¶ I have seen a fountain with one great central basin, and round about it a dozen little basins—and of course it is always possible to fetch water, and to fill these lesser basins separately. But the fountain was not intended to be filled so. That was not the idea in the mind of the designer. He meant the water in the central basin to rise, and well up to the brim and lap and overflow, and in that superabundance from the centre every vessel and receptacle in the structure would be filled. It is thus that the gospel deals with human life.

[1] H. E. Fosdick.

[1] *The Journal of John Wesley*, i. 475.

It does not begin with the brightening of the intellect; it begins with the burning of the heart.[1]

Our hours of greatest illumination have not been those in which we have sat down to reflect on life in the cold light of reason, but those in which we have been conscious of deep and lofty emotions stirring within us. Many of us can recall moments of high emotion in which the veil was rent asunder, and there was given to us such a vision of unseen things as cast a light upon many dark problems and gave us the secret of understanding. We may not be able to pass the revelation on, but we know what we have seen and heard. The light shines and the fire burns, and neither doubt nor disappointment nor failure can quench them.

Matthew Arnold says:—

> Tasks in hours of insight will'd
> May be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

He is not speaking of the activity of reason, but of that of 'the fire which in the heart resides.' The 'hours of insight' are those hours of supreme exaltation which come to us when the Spirit breathes upon the inward fires, and our hearts burn within us. In those hours of revelation we penetrate to the deeper meaning of life, comprehend more clearly the ways of God, see stretching before us the straight path of duty, and will the means for the fulfilment of the end.

3. *The Power of the Burning Heart.*—When the fire is kindled, we cease to be cool and calculating and full of compromise. We take great risks and embark on heroic adventures. We cast our fears to the winds, and become courageous, valiant and bold. Generals on active service attach great importance to morale. But morale is only another name for the burning heart. There are no soldiers to be feared like those who are convinced that they are contending for great ideals, and whose hearts are aflame with the love of truth and freedom and justice. These are the men who will capture strongholds deemed impregnable. The same is true of our spiritual warfare. Call over the roll of those who have moved the world to righteousness, who have launched great crusades, who have led or followed in forlorn hopes, who have 'despoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly,' who have counted not their lives dear for the sake of the Name, and you will find them to be men and women who felt their hearts strangely warmed within them.

4. *The Fellowship of the Burning Heart.*—Go back with these two disciples to Jerusalem. They found men and women whose hearts burned as theirs did. They tarried until, on the Day of Pentecost, a new baptism of fire came upon them, and there was established the Fellowship of the Burning Heart, which went out to conquer the world. Think of those men who launched their great enterprise against the world. They were few, poor, weak, insignificant, and, for the most part, unlearned, but they set themselves undismayed to challenge the might and wealth and culture and sin of imperial Rome. They were imprisoned, exiled, tortured, and done to death, but they pursued their course with joy, and they prevailed. What was their secret? They belonged to the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. And right down the ages, wherever the Church has succeeded in her spiritual mission, wherever she has brought new hope to men, wherever she has swept away wrongs and established the truth in righteousness, it has been because she has merited the title, the Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, 134.

The Sacrament of Realization

Luke xxiv. 35.—'And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.'

Lovers of letters will recall the poem entitled *Conversation* by Cowper, where, after making excellent fun of various kinds of tedious talkers, he stops suddenly, as if he had seen a vision. With arresting abruptness he thinks of that never-to-be-forgotten conversation in the gloaming of the day on the way to Emmaus.

> It happen'd, on a solemn even-tide,
> Soon after he that was our Surety died,
> Two bosom friends, each pensively inclin'd,
> The scene of all those sorrows left behind,

Sought their own village, busied as they went,
In musings worthy of the great event:
They spake of him they lov'd, of him whose life,
Though blameless, had incurr'd perpetual strife,
Whose deeds had left, in spite of hostile arts,
A deep memorial graven on their hearts.
The recollection, like a vein of ore,
The farther trac'd, enrich'd them still the more;
They thought him, and they justly thought him, one
Sent to do more than he appear'd t' have done;
T' exalt a people, and to place them high
Above all else, and wonder'd he should die.
Ere yet they brought their journey to an end,
A stranger join'd them, courteous as a friend,
And ask'd them, with a kind engaging air,
What their affliction was, and begg'd a share.
Inform'd, he gather'd up the broken thread,
And, truth and wisdom gracing all he said,
Explain'd, illustrated, and search'd so well,
The tender theme, on which they chose to dwell,
That reaching home, the night, they said, is near,
We must not now be parted, sojourn here—
The new acquaintance soon became a guest,
And made so welcome at their simple feast,
He bless'd the bread, but vanish'd at the word,
And left them both exclaiming, 'Twas the Lord!
Did not our hearts feel all he deign'd to say,
Did they not burn within us by the way?

In one of his letters the poet refers to the incident: 'I have been intimate with a man of fine taste who has confessed to me that, though he could not subscribe to the truth of Christianity itself, he thought that if the stamp of Divinity was anywhere to be found in the Scriptures, it was vividly impressed upon that passage of St Luke.' It is indeed true. There is about this narrative an air of reality which sets it apart from other such records. It has a restraint, a dignity and a delicacy which give it every mark of authenticity. Here we have the Divine Companion revealing Himself to His friends not by His profound exposition of prophecy, but by a familiar gesture—all His own—in the breaking of bread. 'As he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened and they knew him.'

1. This, we remember, was only on the evening of Easter Day. And the two disciples were not of the number of the twelve Apostles, so that they had not been present on the Thursday evening before, when our Lord took the bread and brake it, and gave to them saying, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' We are not, then, to think here of a recollection of the institution of that chief Christian rite—rather of His ways in former times, perhaps at all meals which He shared with His disciples, as on the occasion when He multiplied the loaves and fishes, when it is said that 'He took the loaves, and blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.' It was a gesture not new in itself when He added the mysterious words 'This is my body.' Rather it was one already so habitual with Him that when they saw it these two disciples doubted no longer who was with them. Still, when St Luke in telling the story uses the words, 'He was known to them in the *breaking of bread*'—the phrase which had become, as we see in the Acts, very early indeed a recognized and, so to say, technical phrase for that prescribed 'breaking of bread in remembrance of Him'—we can hardly doubt that he means us to notice that it was in that very familiar act, that gesture by which He bade His Church specially remember Him, that He was recognized. These two disciples, though they recognized Him by it, did not know at the moment probably what new meaning He had put upon it, how it was to be the sacred symbol of His presence to His people to all time; but they would know this soon afterwards, and look back on this recognition of Him with fresh insight, and a fresh thrill of reverence. And so we may take the words to ourselves too, and believe that He may be known to us also 'in the breaking of bread.'

2. Does not all this accord with our own experience? Is it not at Holy Communion that we look back over our lives and see how they have been uplifted and taught and gladdened by a Divine presence that we did not recognize?

Only those who have resolutely tried know how hard it is to live in the constant realization of the unseen. We cannot turn our backs on the ordinary business of life—its conventions and claims are round us all day long—we are like divers groping in the half-dark amid the tangled seaweed on the sea bottom—too far

down to see the boat anchored above them in the sunlight. We live by faith, not by sight.

Yet every life needs its moments of realization—moments when it shall concentrate its power on the task of seeing Him who is invisible. Without this our spiritual energies flag; we become the mere slaves of our surroundings; the tangled seaweed sucks us down and in the dark heart of it we are stifled. And such moments come to us by the express provision of Christ. 'He is known of us in breaking of bread.'

This, of course, does not exhaust the significance of the Eucharist. We know that the life realized must become the life received. But we may believe that the Eucharist associated itself first of all in the mind of the Church with the fact of the Resurrection. For it told of a Christ ubiquitous in His power to bless. 'He is risen; He hath ascended; He sitteth at the right hand of the father'—so the Church confessed in her creeds. Yet He is here; He is among us; 'He is known of us in the breaking of bread.' And so there comes back into human lives all the lost romance that we thought had been left behind us. For what is romance but the haunting sense of the spiritual reality behind things. And if in every Communion we renew our realization of the presence of Christ, will not the glory of that realization transform the common day, lift it above all that is squalid and mean and base, give to all its commonplace duties a new consecration? We wrong our own lives, and we wrong the world that we are here to help, when we neglect this resetting of our lives in tune with the Infinite.

3. But what is gained by realization? If He is with us when we do not know, is not that unrecognized presence enough?

(1) What is gained? First of all, *the realization of our faithlessness.* We remember with shame how nearly we gave up, how timidly we said that some people believed that He was alive, how unwilling we were to abandon our own theories and ideas. Aye, and darker memories than these—of things done that we would rather have cut off our right hands than have done if we had known that He was with us. The punishment of sin is the realization of sin. Happy is the man who finds that punishment waiting for him where Christ the Saviour-Judge reveals Himself at the breaking of bread. For there he shall learn the greatness of his own sin at the place where he learns also the greatness of the Divine love.

(2) And secondly, *gratitude.* It is not good that things provided should come without the sweet sense of providing—not good that we should be every day dependent upon God and never realize the truth. It was by a true instinct that the Church took hold of that thought and added to the names of the Lord's Supper the new name of the Eucharist. It is the service of thanksgiving because it is the service of realization.

(3) And lastly, *the power of witness.* 'They rose up at the same hour and returned to Jerusalem'—and 'they told what things were done in the way.' No man can speak convincingly to any other man of things that he has not realized. What power of help is there in the vague generalities, and empty platitudes, of men who speak what they do not know, and testify what they have not seen?

¶ Raymund Lull went out to the Moslem world to give a divine life which he already possessed in his own soul. It was in his inner experience of the glorified Christ that we find the secret and source of his doctrine and life: what he thought, what he was, what he suffered. And this must be true of all true missionaries. The primary thing is personal testimony. 'This I have felt. This Christ has done for me. I preach whom I know. That which was from the beginning, that which I have heard, that which I have seen with my eyes, that which I beheld and my hands handled, concerning the Word of life . . . declare I unto you.'[1]

It was the special purpose of our Lord in those forty days to lead His disciples into the habit of realization, so that it might become the most natural thing for them at any moment to say to themselves 'I am in the presence of Christ, my Lord.' And He began that process of training when He broke bread on that first Easter evening. And for us, too, our training in the habit of realization begins with the breaking of bread. Begins—for it does not end there. For he who rightly learns the lesson of that Holy Sacrament shall find the Divine presence at his table at every meal, by his side on every familiar road, making the common things of life sacramental.

[1] S. M. Zwemer, *Raymund Lull.*

¶ Bishop Gore, in his 'Body of Christ,' has some excellent teaching, that our Lord's coming to us in the Holy Communion is not like a visit which lasts a few minutes and then passes away. He enters in that He may dwell with us. That is why the Prayer-book does not only tell us that we should 'take This,' but also that we should take it away to 'feed on Him by faith with thanksgiving.' To put the matter in another way, our Communions are meant to be, not incidents apart from our daily life, but salient points in a life which is all communion with God in Christ.[1]

¶ His biographer tells us that the example of Brother Lawrence was a stronger inducement to those who beheld his life to walk in the presence of God than any arguments. 'His very countenance was edifying; such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it as could not but affect the beholders. And it was observed that in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen he still preserved his recollection and heavenly mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season, with an even, uninterrupted composure and tranquillity of spirit.' 'The time of business,' said he, 'does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the Blessed Sacrament.'[2]

Be known to us in breaking bread,
  But do not then depart;
Saviour, abide with us, and spread
  Thy table in our heart.

There sup with us in love divine;
  Thy body and Thy blood,
That living bread, that heavenly wine,
  Be our immortal food.[3]

His Hands

Luke xxiv. 39.—'Behold my hands.'

The Bible is signally distinguished for this, that with a message from God it reaches the human heart, but not less remarkable is the attention which it directs to the human hands. In our Western speech, with its leaning towards abstraction, we speak of character and its outflow in conduct; but in the Eastern speech, which has always been pictorial, men spoke of the heart and its witness in the hands. Who shall ascend into the hill of God? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. And Pilate, wishing to assert his innocence, in a manner which the Jews could comprehend—Pilate did not cry, My conduct is reproachless—in the presence of them all he washed his hands. That is the symbolism of the hand in Scripture. It is conduct incarnate, the sign of the active life. It is the organ through which is sketched, as on a screen, the thought that is singing or surging in the heart.

Now if that be true of every human hand, it will be very specially true of the hands of Christ. He is always saying to us 'Behold my heart': but in the same voice He says, 'Behold my hands.' What are these hands? What do they signify?

1. *They are hands of toil.*—Let us go into the carpenter's shop at Nazareth and spend a few moments there. What can we say about Jesus as a workman? There is no doubt that He worked hard. There was no laziness all those years in which He wrought as a carpenter. It follows that He was a conscientious and thorough workman. The farmers on the hillside who brought their agricultural implements for Jesus to mend knew that He would always make a good job of them. The housewives certified that there was no better mender of furniture than the Son of Joseph. And when He finally left the carpenter's bench to begin His public ministry, He must have walked proudly through the village, for not a man or woman in the community could say a word unfavourable to the village carpenter.

Close by the careless worker's side,
  Still patient stands
The Carpenter of Nazareth,
  With piercèd hands
Outstretched to plead unceasingly,
  His Love's demands.

[1] *Letters of the Rev. H. H. Jeaffreson*, 203.
[2] *The Practice of the Presence of God*, 25.
[3] Montgomery.

Longing to pick the hammer up
And strike a blow,
Longing to feel His plane swing out,
Steady and slow,
The fragrant shavings falling down,
Silent as snow.

Because this is my Work, O Lord,
It must be Thine,
Because it is a human task
It is divine.
Take me, and brand me with Thy Cross,
Thy slave's proud sign.[1]

There is a lesson in this fact for our times. If Christ was not afraid of honest toil, if He put His best into it, and if He took a pride in it, we need not be ashamed to give ourselves whole-heartedly to whatever work may be ours. On the contrary, we should be ashamed to do otherwise. 'Behold my hands,' says Jesus, and they are hands of toil.

2. *They are hands of brotherhood.*—When Jesus came into Peter's house, we read, He saw his wife's mother laid and sick of a fever. And what did He do? He put out His hand and touched her, and she arose and ministered to them all. When He was in Bethsaida they brought a blind man to Him, beseeching Him that He would give him his sight again. And what did He do? He took the blind man by the hand, and hand in hand they left the town together. And the world will never forget that scene at Nain, when Jesus met the sad procession to the grave, and moved with compassion put forth His hand, and touched the bier. In all these cases, and in a hundred others, what men recognized in the touch was brotherhood. Christ came alongside of suffering and sorrow, brought Himself into living and actual touch with it.

And always, where the gospel is at work, it stretches out its hands in the same way. Is not this the glory of the Christian spirit that it pulsates with the sweet sense of brotherhood. The poet Crabbe, talking about charity, says:—

A common bounty may relieve distress,
But whom the vulgar succour they oppress.

But the Christian never lowers when he helps,
for with everything he gives, he gives his hand.

¶ In that striking chapter in *Oliver Twist* which describes the pathetic interview between Rose Maylie, in all the sweetness of her pure girlhood, and the soiled and outcast Nancy, Dickens tells us how the kind tone, the sweet voice, the gentle manner of Rose took the girl completely by surprise. Nancy burst into tears. 'Oh, lady, lady!' she said, clasping her hands passionately before her face, 'if there was more like you, there would be fewer like me,—there would—there would!'

3. *They are hands of power.*—When Jesus went back the second time to Nazareth, do you remember what the villagers said about Him? 'What wisdom is this that is given Him,' they said, 'that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands.' They had seen these hands busy at carpentering once, but now there was a power in their touch that baffled them. And then we turn to the Gospel of St John, where our Saviour Himself is speaking of His sheep: and He says, 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.' Behold His hands, then, for they are hands of power: they are powerful to do and powerful to keep.

¶ I read the other day in some book about China a remark that had been made by a young Chinese convert. He belonged to the literary class, and had studied Confucius, and the remark he made was something of this kind. He said, 'The difference between Confucius and Christ is not so much a question of morality: for I find the golden rule in the sacred books of the East, and a great deal more that Jesus might have uttered; but the difference is that once I was told what to do, but left quite helpless and powerless to do it; but now with the ideal comes the power.'[1]

4. *They are hands of tenderness.*—Of all the exquisite pictures in the gospel there is none more exquisite than the scene when 'the mothers of Salem their children brought to Jesus.' With a mother's instinct for a man who was really good they wished their children to be blessed by Him. And the disciples would have kept the children off: Christ was too busy with great affairs to heed an infant. They had

[1] G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, *Lighten our Darkness*, 31.

[1] G. H. Morrison.

never guessed yet that the Kingdom of Heaven was mirrored for Jesus in these childish eyes. Then Jesus drew the little children to Him, and blessed them; but He did more than that. It had sunk deep into the memories of the Evangelists that in blessing them He laid His hand upon them. Do not spoil the act by making it sacerdotal. Do not imagine that He was communicating grace. It was an act of the sweetest and most natural tenderness, the gentle and caressing touch of love. When He laid His hand upon the infant's head, He was laying it upon the mother's heart.

Is not that one of the wonders of Christ's touch—the union of power and gentleness that marks it? It is mighty to heal, mighty to raise the dead; but a bruised reed it will not break. Why is the gospel so precious when the chair is empty and the grave is full? It is not only because the hand of Jesus is powerful to console and to assuage; it is because when every other touch would pain, the touch of Jesus is exquisitely tender. Why are our Christian homes so full of gentle love, so different from the stern spirit of antiquity? There is only one answer, it is 'Behold his hands': it is the touch of Christ which has achieved it.

5. *They are hands that were pierced.*—Their beauty was torn away from them with wounds. They were pierced with nails, and fastened to the Cross, in the hour when Jesus Christ was crucified. But it is the hands which were pierced that have been the mightiest power in human history. Not the hands laid upon the blind man's eyes, not the hands laid upon the children's head, have been so mighty in the world's redemption as the hands that were marred and wounded on the Cross.

¶ There was a little girl whose mother was very beautiful. She was very beautiful except for one thing—her hands were not beautiful. They were deformed and scarred. And her little girl wondered. She was troubled about these hands and at last she felt she had to speak. 'Mother,' she said, 'I love everything about you except your hands. Why are they so ugly?' Then her mother told her the story of her hands. 'Years ago when you were a tiny thing the room that you slept in went on fire. I rushed upstairs to take you out of your burning cradle. But the flames caught my sleeves, and though they were put out they left their traces on my hands and arms. That is why my hands are so ugly and twisted.' There was silence for a moment, and then the little girl looked up with tears in her eyes and whispered, 'I love you, mother, I love everything about you: but I love your hands now best of all.'

'Hath He marks to lead me to Him
If He be my Guide?'
'In His feet and hands are wound-prints,
And His side!'

Jesus Christ Himself

Luke xxiv. 39.—'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.'

1. Certain religions have been more or less independent of their founders. A Buddhist, for example, might go on being a good and consistent Buddhist, though he forgot that Buddha ever existed; because Buddha was content to lay down principles of truth, and to teach a way of life. But with Christ it is entirely otherwise. He did not simply leave us principles and precepts, and reveal a system of truth and a way of living; He said, 'I am the Way, I am the Truth, I am the Life. Come unto Me.'

¶ Jesus did not come to bring *a* way of life—He came to be Life itself. He did not come to bring a set of truths to set alongside of other truths, as some have superficially imagined, He came to be Truth; and if one goes far enough with truth, it will lead him by the hand till he faces Him who is Truth itself. Dean Inge rightly says, 'Jesus did not come to bring a religion but to be Religion,' and if we are seriously religious we will have to be according to His mind and spirit or else fail to be religious. In the language of Matthew Arnold, 'Jesus is an Ultimate.'[1]

All through the Gospels our Lord persistently preaches Himself. He asserts His personal authority: 'I say unto you'—that is His message. He claims men as His personal right: 'Follow Me: forsake everything else, and follow Me'—that is His call. And men obeyed Him for His own sake. They went after Him for love of Himself. The power of

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, 161.

His summons lay in the lips that framed it and the voice that spoke. Christ was His own supreme attraction, His own irresistible appeal.

¶ As He walks, disciples are made; He says 'Come,' 'with me,' 'after me,' and they come.

Witness the men whom with a word He gaineth,
Bold who were base, and voiceful who were dumb.

They were polarized by Him, hypnotized if you will; only, in this form of sleep, the Self-man is made to slumber and the Real-man to awake.[1]

2. The preaching of these first disciples corresponded with their experience. The gospel which they proclaimed is taken up with one theme; its sum and substance is Christ Himself. In their sermons and their epistles they are not expounding a system, they are adoring a Saviour.

¶ To the apostles and early Christians Christ is the Prince of Life, Lord of all, Judge of the living and the dead, at God's right hand, the Giver of the Spirit, the Fulfiller of all the promises of God. He is not the first of Christians or the best of men, but something absolutely different from this. The apostles and their converts are not persons who share the faith of Jesus; they are persons who have Jesus as the object of their faith and who believe in God through Him.[2]

In these days we often think about Christian doctrines in the abstract. We discuss the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, sometimes almost as though they were terms in an intellectual equation. But for the Apostles each of these sacred truths was bound up with the Personality of Jesus Christ.

How did they preach the *Incarnation*? Not as a theory of the way in which the Infinite could assume human nature. No; they preached it as the unspeakable reality which their eyes had seen and their hands had handled. The very Life of God had been manifested, and they had known Him who came from the bosom of the Father. 'The word was made flesh,' they cried; 'He has tabernacled among us, and we have beheld his glory.' The Incarnation to its first witnesses was no theological theory: it was an actual living Person—it was Christ Himself.

Again, they preached the *Atonement*—but how? Not as an abstract proposition, a scheme whereby God could forgive sins. No; they preached it as the act of Christ's unutterable sacrifice, the deed of His Divine devotion. 'He gave himself for me. He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree. He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He saved others, himself he could not save.' This was the atonement—the redeeming self-surrender of Christ.

And they preached the *Resurrection*: preached it far more emphatically than we do. But the soul of their faith in the Resurrection was this—that Jesus Christ Himself was really alive. They had lost Him, but He had come back again from darkness, having swallowed up death in victory. 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.' This was the gospel which conquered an unbelieving world. Though He was dead, He is alive again for evermore, He is with us even unto the world's end.

The theology of the first Christians grew naturally out of their experience. They taught and toiled and suffered for one thing only. Their whole desire was focussed on Christ Himself—to know Him, to please Him, to drink of His cup on earth, to enter into His presence in paradise at last. For they looked forward, as well they might, to a brighter life than this, and a happier world. But what was their dream of heaven? It was the vision which smote the dying eyes of the first martyr, when he lifted his angel-face and cried, 'I see heaven opened, and Jesus at the right hand of God.' What had been the Lord's parting promise? 'I will receive you unto myself. Where I am, there shall also my servant be.' Even so, Lord; in Thy presence is fullness of joy. Here was the eternal recompense of the faithful—to be with Christ, to possess Christ, to lose themselves in Him.

3. The Church has fallen far below its heavenly ideal. Yet even in the corruptions and perversions of faith we recognize an instinct which gropes after faith's supreme object. The history of Christian controversy, for example, is a dreary and distracting record. But in early ages the bitterest disputes were always concerned with the Person of the Lord;

[1] J. Rendel Harris, *The Sufferings and the Glory*, 53.
[2] J. Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*.

and though their temper often denied Him, their drift and current set towards this one Centre. In later centuries, when theologians contended over systems of doctrine, their controversies still clustered round the office and the work of Christ Himself.

Here, then, is the soul and substance of our holy faith. Christianity is Christ Himself. Our religion can never exist aloof from His living Person. We are bound up with Him, as a limb is related to the body, as a branch is related to the tree. Our faith centres in Him and radiates from Him who has said, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.' In all the vocabulary of the inward life there is no word which we cannot spell with letters borrowed from His heart. Day by day we discover that Christ is the beginning and the end of our experience, the First we remember and the Last we forget, Himself our aim and our goal and our prize.

¶ It is a most significant thing for India and the world that a great people of amazing spiritual capacities is seeing, with remarkable insight, that Christ is the centre of Christianity, that utter commitment to Him and catching His mind and spirit and living His life constitute a Christian. This realization has remarkable potentialities for the future religious history of the whole race.[1]

Remission of Sins

Luke xxiv. 47.—'And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem' (R.V.).

We are not told very much of what happened during the forty days that intervened between the Resurrection and the Ascension; we are not given many of the conversations which took place between our Lord and His disciples; but we may believe that He busied Himself during those forty days with instructing His Apostles in the gospel, which it would become their duty to carry throughout the wide world. Up to the Resurrection the disciples were very short-sighted, not to say blind. He had to open to them the Scriptures. And so He was occupied during the last part of the time in instructing them in the gospel of which they were to become the preachers. And this was part, and a very large part, of the gospel in the sense of the good news, entrusted to them: they were to preach 'repentance and remission of sins . . . in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.' It is the promise of 'remission of sins,' that we are to consider.

1. *What is Remission?*—The Greek word suggests a releasing, as of a prisoner, or a letting go, as of a debt. Remission, therefore, seems to carry with it the notion of the letting go of the debt and penalty incurred by sin. That is to say, remission is a bigger thing almost than forgiveness. Remission carries with it the notion of release, not simply from sin, but from its penalty as well. These two things can be distinguished, in thought at any rate, and it will help us perhaps in our thinking if we deal with them separately—the forgiveness of sins, and then the cancelling of sin's penalty.

First of all, and clearly, *remission involves the forgiveness of the sin itself, the treating of that sin as non-existent.* 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins'—that is remission, and perhaps it is the principal thing in remission. Sin is the thing that separates between us and God; it is the thing that puts enmity between man and God. And 'remission' signifies the removing of that barrier, the taking away of that cause of difference, and the setting of man once again at perfect peace with God. That is the chief element in the remission or forgiveness of sin.

But the promised 'remission' of the gospel means more than the mere blotting out of sin and the removal of the cause of separation between man and God. *Remission also means release from the pains and the penalties which are sin's rightful punishment.* For the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of human experience are that moral wrong always entails certain consequences in the way of penalty. Those consequences are partly physical and partly spiritual; they are inflicted in part upon the body and in part upon the soul. There are, for instance, certain sins that wreak their vengeance on the body. The drunkard and the profligate pay the penalty of unholy indulgence in disordered nerves, in shattered health and shortened lives. The thief and the burglar pay the penalty in imprisonment and

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, 23.

social outlawry. It is a symptom of the materialistic temper of our time that we think more of these bodily pains than we do of spiritual penalties. But these spiritual penalties are no less real and they are infinitely more terrible. A man is smitten in his body with disease, we will say, as the result of profligacy and sin, but he suffers often from something harder to bear than disease—shame and the remorse of soul.

And then the Bible speaks of a future penalty, of the wrath of God. In these days we are strangely silent about the wrath and judgment of God. But our silence does not alter the facts. The wrath and judgment of God are tremendous realities. The worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched, and the outer darkness, and the wailing and gnashing of teeth—symbols, yes: but they stand for the reaction of the holy God against sin.

> Thou judgest us; thy purity
> Doth all our lusts condemn;
> The love that draws us nearer thee
> Is hot with wrath to them.[1]

If we believe in a holy God He is bound to react against sin in wrath and judgment, and there must be some dread penalty for sin in the world to come, to correspond to these terrible figures which we find in the New Testament.

Which of these penalties does remission really remove? It removes the latter and removes it absolutely. The forgiven man is no longer the object of the wrath of God; he is the object of His favour. He will not be shut out in the outer darkness. He will be amongst those who hear the invitation, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' He will share in all the light and gladness of the Father's house. 'There is . . . now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' And what about remorse and shame of soul? That, too, in great measure, is removed. The sense of God's favour and grace drowns and overwhelms the shame, and the pain and the sin are submerged and almost forgotten in the joy of forgiveness, so that the forgiven soul is amongst those that rejoice always.

What about physical results? Are they cancelled? Not always, and perhaps not completely. The penitent drunkard is not restored to perfect soundness of health. The convicted criminal does not easily, or all at once, emerge out of his degradation, and win back the respect and trust of men. And yet even on the physical side penalties are alleviated and sometimes almost entirely removed. The healing powers of grace repair the ravages of sin. You remember what happened to the younger son in the parable. He was forgiven when his father, seeing him yet a long way off, fell on his neck and kissed him. He was forgiven then. But the father was not content simply to forgive. When he got the boy into the house he began at once to repair the damage and the ravage and the ruin wrought by his sojourn in the far country: the dirt, the filth, the rags, the emaciation; he began to obliterate every trace of them. 'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him,' he said, 'and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it.' He began at once to cancel even the penalties of his son's folly and sin. And that is a picture of God. When God welcomes the sinner back He does more than just blot out his sin. He proceeds to release man from the bitter consequences of his sin.

¶ God saved me. I was almost a tramp; but see the difference to-night. He has taken the appetite for that frightful rum away. I remember living in a basement over in Brooklyn without even a chair or a bed in it; in fact, we didn't have anything: yet He has taken us up, washed us, and made us clean in His own blood. . . . I praise Jesus for the wonderful change he has made in my life in the last few years. It would make a wonderful picture to paint me as I was when I first came to God, and as I am here to-night. He cleansed me inside and out.[1]

2. *Is Remission Possible?*—The possibility of 'remission' in the sense we have been putting upon it, and which is plainly the sense of the New Testament, is sharply challenged. The father, we are told, may receive his son back again from the far country, but what he cannot do is to save his son from the results of the riotous living in which he indulged while he sojourned there. Sin and punishment, we are told, are inseparably linked together; and

[1] Whittier.

[1] Jerry M'Auley.

if a man commits the one, he must be content to endure the other. It is all a matter of fixed, rigid, inviolable law. You remember how Emerson states it: 'Crime and punishment grow out of one stem. Punishment is a fruit which, unsuspected, ripens within the flower of the pleasure which contained it.' Cause and effect, means and ends, seed and fruit cannot be severed. In this world it is tit for tat, 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' blood for blood, measure for measure.

There is unquestionably an element of truth in this. But is it the whole truth? Is it true that our sins always find us out? Is it true that every sinner gets exactly the punishment which he deserves? If you think about it for one minute, you will see that the facts simply shout out a loud and scornful denial of such an assertion.

Take an illustration. Here is a man who has been guilty of fraud, but the fraud was not discovered and he ultimately built a fortune. Here is another man guilty of exactly the same fraud, but in his case the fraud was found out and he became an inmate of a prison cell. What is the use, in the face of a contrast like that, in saying that our sins always find us out and that each man receives to the last jot and tittle just the punishment that he deserves?

Or take another illustration. Here are two men; both of them have sinned, both of them fell. But in the one case, there was a great love to watch over him and ultimately to win him back to virtue and honour, and he ends his life a respected and virtuous man. In the other case, there was no love to watch over him and pray for him and help him, with the result that he sank from one depth to another until at length, an outcast and a pariah, he fell into an ignominious grave. Who, in the face of such cases, will maintain that spiritual laws exact punishment to the last jot and tittle? In this case redeeming Love meets and baffles the physical law and wins for the man a certain remission of penalty. And what these people who talk about punishment being inevitable and having to be paid to the uttermost farthing continually forget is, that there is such a love, only infinitely more tender and more powerful than the best human love. There is the infinite love of God watching over us and ever seeking to redeem us from our sin and to save us from its penalties.

3. *The Fact of Remission.*—The place where we see God intervening between man and the consequences of his sin is the Cross of Christ. For Christ by His sacrifice made it possible for God to keep His holiness and yet to justify the ungodly. God cannot freely forgive. He is the Holy Ruler of this world. He has got to vindicate that holiness. Wrath, the outer darkness, judgment—we deserve them all; but far from having to bear the penalty to the last jot and tittle, all this is 'remitted' absolutely and entirely, so that though we are sinners we can look forward, not to darkness, but to light; not to death, but to life; not to exclusion, but to the joy of the Father's House.

And that is not the whole of the 'remission' that comes to us through the Cross of Christ, for the Cross is not only a fact in history, but it is a present power as well. One of the dire results of sin is that it seems to soak into the very being of a man. It stains his mind, it pollutes his memory, it poisons his thought. But the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us, wipes the mind clean. The power of Christ's Cross gets right down to the heart and the mind. God's grace can go as far and as deep as sin can go. It is no matter how low a man lies, there is always one thing underneath. 'Underneath are the everlasting arms.'

¶ One night, when I was crossing the Atlantic, an officer of our boat told me that we had just passed over the spot where the *Titanic* went down. And I thought of all that life and wreckage beyond the power of man to recover and redeem. And I thought of the great bed of the deep sea, with all its held treasure, too far down for man to reach and restore. 'Too far down!' And then I thought of all the human wreckage engulfed and sunk in oceanic depths of nameless sin. Too far gone! For what? Too far down! For what? Not too far down for the love of God! Listen to this: 'He descended into hell,' and He will descend again if you are there. 'If I make my bed in hell, thou art there.' 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' 'He *bore* our sin'; then He got beneath it; down to it and beneath it; and there is no human wreckage, lying in the ooze of the deepest sea of iniquity, that His deep love cannot reach and redeem. What a Gospel! However far down, God's love can get beneath it![1]

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Things that Matter Most*, 17.

Stronger His love than death or hell;
Its riches are unsearchable:
  The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see;
They cannot reach the mystery,
  The length, and breadth, and height!

Beginning at Jerusalem

Luke xxiv. 47.—'Beginning at Jerusalem.'

1. THERE is a wise practicalness in this command. For what does it mean? It means just this—begin at home, start work just where you are. Our Lord had always the world in His eye, but He bids His disciples begin by doing the work which lay at their doors.

The principle that underlies this command is as valid for us as it was for the first disciples. The command does not mean that we are to begin literally at Jerusalem. But it means that we are to begin our Christian service where these disciples had to begin theirs—in the place where we live and labour.

(1) *Begin in your own home*—that is your Jerusalem. If you are parents, begin with your own children. Are you training your children in the way they should go? Do you talk to them? And pray for them? And pray with them? We are what we are, under God, because fathers and mothers began their work for Christ 'at home.' And what applies to parents and their children, applies also to brothers and sisters, and husbands and wives. Have you any whom you love who are living for self and sin rather than for God? Then, begin by trying to win those for Christ. 'Andrew went first and found his brother Simon.' Have you no brother, or sister, who needs finding? That is your *first* duty.

A brother's heart had Andrew. Joy beyond
  All joy to him, the promised Christ to find,
  But heavenly joy may not to duty blind.
He cannot rest, his bliss is incomplete,
Till Simon sits with him at Jesus' feet:—
His brother then, by more than natural bond.

(2) And it means this—*Begin in your own place of toil.* Your office, your shop, your place of business, whatever it may be, that is your Jerusalem. And it affords you ample opportunities. Have you no fellow-workmen who are ignorant and out of the way? Are there none of your associates in the office who are living without God in the world? Have you ever borne your witness to them? You need not look far for your field. It is at your very door. Begin at Jerusalem! Christ's Kingdom would come far more quickly if only we who are Christians would take advantage of the opportunities that come daily to our hands, and make some honest effort to win those for Christ with whom we are brought in contact by our business and employment.

I say to thee, do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet—
In lane, highway, or open street,

That he, and we, and all men move
Under a canopy of love
As broad as the blue sky above.

(3) And it means this further—*Begin in your own town and country.* We ought always to be keenly sensitive to the needs of far-off countries. But we need not go to China in order to find ignorance and wretchedness and sin. They are here in England. They are here in our streets and at our very doors. Here in our own midst there are people without God and without hope—who are as pagan in practice as the inhabitants of Central Africa. And here Jesus Christ would have you begin! Begin at Jerusalem! That was how they ultimately built the ruined walls of the Holy City long ago; every man built over against his own house. And that is how we shall help to establish the new Jerusalem upon earth—by every one of us doing loyally and bravely the work that offers itself to our hand.

¶ Jesus, by an instinctive sympathy, never went into any neighbourhood without finding at once the sick, the poor, the be-deviled. We live in our secluded social circles; we do not know even the maids in our kitchens, the workmen in our factories, the bootblacks and the newsboys who serve us. We deal with our fellows on a cash basis, not on a basis of human interest. And as for the conditions of life in the slums of our own communities, in the jails and asylums, among the sick, the vicious, the homeless, the unemployed, the mentally defective, how little do many of us know or care! But imagine Jesus in one of our com-

munities! He would not live in a social cocoon. He would soon know all the worst need of the town.[1]

2. There is an illustration in this text of the courage of Christ. We are, perhaps, inclined sometimes to over-emphasize the softer elements in Christ's character to the obscuring of the stronger qualities. We emphasize our Lord's gentleness and tenderness; His pitifulness and kindness. And, indeed, there is wonderful comfort in the thought of the 'gentle Jesus.' At the same time we must never forget that to the tenderness of a woman Christ united all the courage of the man. He was not only the gentle Jesus; He was also the strong Son of God. He was not only the Lamb—patient, meek, enduring; He was also the Lion of the tribe of Judah—brave, bold, and absolutely fearless.

His courage is suggested by this command. 'Begin,' says our Lord, 'at Jerusalem.' It was not at Jerusalem a timid man would have begun this mission. For Jerusalem had signalized its bitter enmity by slaying Him on the Cross. Jerusalem had said: 'Not this man, but Barabbas.' Jerusalem had cried, 'Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him!' Jerusalem's hands were still red with His life-blood. Of all places to begin His work Jerusalem seemed the most unlikely. Of all places in the world it seemed the most hopeless and difficult field. And yet our Lord's command reads, 'Begin at Jerusalem.' When we read this command of our Lord's we are reminded of that saying of Danton's, one of the master-spirits of the French Revolution. 'Audacity,' he cried, 'and yet audacity, and always audacity.' Well, there is a splendid and holy audacity about this command of Christ's—'Begin at Jerusalem.' Every one recognized it as audacity. When Peter and John dared to preach Christ in the streets of Jerusalem, and even in the precincts of the Hall of the Sanhedrin itself—it was the magnificent boldness of the act that struck the beholders. And whence had Peter and John derived their boldness? 'When they perceived the boldness of Peter and John they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. 'It was just the courage of Christ they saw in the courage of His disciples.

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *The Meaning of Service*, 24.

Christ reckons no place too difficult to capture. To Him there are no 'impregnable positions.' Napoleon, it is said, when he first suggested taking his army across the Alps, had his engineers all against him. 'Impossible,' they said. 'Impossible?' said the Corsican in his own grandiose way, 'I have no such word in my dictionary.' Well, the word 'impossible' is not in Christ's dictionary. He despairs of no country. He abandons no field as too difficult. He bade His first followers begin at Jerusalem. And He bids us, the followers of to-day, advance into the most hazardous and difficult fields in the full confidence of triumph.

The Witnesses

Luke xxiv. 48, 49.—'And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.'

THE last commandment which our Lord gave to His disciples possesses the unique feature that it was uttered after His triumphant exclamation on the Cross: 'It is finished.' All the other commandments intrinsically looked forward to that event, which was to supply the motive power for their fulfilment. But this looked back upon that event as accomplished. The offering for the sin of the world was made. He who made it was risen from the dead. Up to that point it had always been necessary in a sense to speak in parables. But now the whole design of redemption was unfolded. Here all the truth of His person and of His work was consummated, and an objective fact was provided which could bring repentance and remission of sins to all mankind. A last commandment therefore was needed. He must lay upon His prepared witnesses the task of making known to the world this truth that was meant for the world.

In the great commission our Lord told His disciples to 'begin *from* Jerusalem.' They were to begin at Jerusalem because there the great events of the Christian religion had taken place. There Christ died for the sins of the world; He was buried; He rose the third day according to the Scriptures. If these things were proclaimed and believed by large numbers of people who had the means of investigating the facts, the Apostles could go elsewhere with

some assurance that their preaching would not be as idle tales to those who heard. It was most fitting that, in the very city where Christ was rejected, He should be preached as the Prince of Life, as the Son of the Most High God.

But the Apostles did not confine their labours to Jerusalem till all the people in that city were reached and won to the faith. They did not so interpret the parting charge of their Lord. Having made a beginning in one place, they hurried on to the next. They sought to reach every part of the habitable globe with the message of the gospel.

Of all Christ's commandments it is true to say that they had a world-wide application. No local colour, no national peculiarity, clings to His ethics. Nothing which He commanded to be done depends in the least on special conditions of race or government, of culture or knowledge. So instinctively did those who received His commandments incline to go out into all the world, that in the first tentative missionary journey He felt it necessary expressly to prevent the disciples from going into the ways of the Gentiles. What should ever have suggested to those narrowest of Jews that they should go into the ways of the Gentiles? What, except that all His teaching breathed of the world as such, and broke all frontiers, and rushed over all obstacles.

Love Jesus, and you wish to tend His sheep and feed His lambs, nor do you ask whether the sheep are of this or of that fold. No sooner has a man taken up his cross to follow Christ than some far-off stranger, like Simon of Cyrene, comes to share it with him. And thus the command, 'Go and make disciples of all nations.' There are many critics who would maintain that it was not uttered by Jesus, but that it was an addition of a later age. That makes no difference. It was the commandment of Jesus uttered or unexpressed. Each of us would have added this commandment for himself if we had not found it in the gospel. For after coming to the Cross, and believing in Him who was there lifted up, the natural outcry of experience is: Here is a truth capable of saving all mankind, nor can we rest until every human being knows what has brought life and peace and power to ourselves.

¶ In his latest volume,[1] Dr J. D. Jones recalls a fine story of Rabbi Duncan, the great Hebrew scholar. He had a perfect genius for languages. His genius for languages was only excelled by his devotion to his Lord. Some poor Eastern was brought into the Edinburgh hospital, sick with a mortal sickness. Nobody understood his speech. When he heard about the case, Duncan said, 'I will learn his language, that I may tell him about Jesus.' That, says Dr Jones, is how we shall feel, if we have ourselves received mercy. We shall want to tell everyone about Jesus.

¶ 'The only real argument against Foreign Missions,' says Mr Charter Piggott, 'is that one has no good news to deliver.'

From the glory and the gladness,
  From His secret place,
From the rapture of His Presence,
  From the radiance of His Face,
Christ, the Son of God, hath *sent* me
  Through the midnight lands;
Mine the mighty ordination
  Of the Piercèd Hands.

In these last words of the Lord there are three thoughts: first the truth we are to make known—'these things'; second the debt of responsibility in the declaration 'ye are witnesses'; and third the dynamic indicated in the promise—'I send forth the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high.'

1. *The Deposit of Truth.*—'These things.' What things? The answer to that inquiry must be discovered in the words of Jesus immediately preceding: 'These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me.'

'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day.' 'And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'

(1) First, the Lord claimed that in His ministry there was fulfilment of the economy of the past, familiar to the men of His day as 'the law, the prophets, and the psalms.' In the law of Moses was contained the revelation of the will of God for man. It may be called

[1] *Watching the Cross*, 296.

the presentation of the ideal. The history of the people was that of failure to realize the ideal, and in the prophets we have the teaching which corrects the failure and recalls to the original ideal. In the Psalms we have the prayers of desire, the longings of the human heart after the realization of that ideal presented in the law, and defended in the prophets. The claim of Christ was that all these things were fulfilled in Him; that He had fulfilled the ideal; that in life and teaching He had vindicated the prophetic utterances; that in His ministry He fulfilled all the hopes and aspirations of the past. The aspirations of the human heart, as revealed in that most wonderful collection of devotional utterances wherein, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, humanity sang out all its emotion, were all answered in Him, and through Him, in the experience of such as were brought into living association with Him. The stupendous and magnificent claim of Christ was that all these things of the past found fulfilment in Him; and the charge He laid upon His disciples was that they were to be witnesses of these things.

(2) Another thing they witnessed to was the fact of the suffering and glory of Christ. In that is contained the whole story of the mission of Christ, that mission whereby He not only fulfils the past, but initiates the new. The thought of fulfilment necessarily involves that of transition. From the old which presented ideals, corrected failures, and inspired hope, we come to the new—that which bestows repentance and remission of sins, so that there may be realization. Between these lay the actual work of the Christ, His suffering and His glory, His travail and His triumph, His death and His resurrection. He is seen standing between the two, fulfilling the expectation of the old, creating the energy for the new, and He does so by the way of death and resurrection. Through His witnesses these things are to be unfolded to the world. Here it is of supreme importance that we remind ourselves that witnessing is infinitely more than preaching. The truth of the resurrection becomes triumphant through lives transfigured by resurrection.

(3) The final phase of witness is that of the result produced by the death and resurrection of Christ. The process of moral reconstruction is indicated in the suggestive words, 'repentance and remission of sins,' repentance being the human attitude, and remission of sins the Divine answer. Apart from repentance no man is ever regenerated or renewed. Remission of sins is the answer of God to that repentance The importance of the interrelation between these cannot be over-stated. The only hope of moral reconstruction is that of repentance. The wonder of the work of Christ is that He gives that repentance, and the responsibility of the Church is that it witnesses to that fact. To stand in the presence of the awful purity of Christ is to come into the place of repentance. The Church's responsibility is that of bearing such witness to the purity of Christ, and the glory of that purity, as to produce such a repentance in the lives of sinning men. Wherever that repentance is yielded to, there immediately follows the remission of sins, which is infinitely more than forgiveness. It is the loosing of the soul from sin.

2. What, then, is *our Debt of Responsibility?* 'Ye are witnesses.' The inquiry is answered as we understand the meaning of the word 'witnesses.' In order to witness-bearing there must first be realization, which is infinitely more than apprehending intellectually. No man or woman or child can witness for Christ who has not realized 'these things' in personal experience. To witness for Christ, then, is to live the life which at all times and under all circumstances recognizes the supremacy of the spiritual; which constantly recognizes that the material is none other than the carbon upon which the essential light of the spiritual is revealed. A witness is one who makes no boast in the accidentals of an external morality, but who is pure in heart. He is one who at all times, and in all places, and under all circumstances, reveals Christ. A witness must also tell the secret of how his own life has been transformed. There is certainly need for a new emphasis of this phase of responsibility. It is perfectly true that proclamation apart from manifestation is of no value, and that the testimony of life is the most powerful in fulfilment of responsibility. It is equally true, however, that so surely as there is manifestation there will be inquiry. If in the lives of His people Christ is victorious, and through them is manifest, then they must be ready to speak

to those in their own home, to those they meet in social life, to those with whom they come in contact in all the ways of life, of Him who has been their Saviour.

¶ On one occasion John Kennedy, vicar of St John's, Boscombe, was travelling to Cambridge to speak at a meeting there, when another man entered the compartment in which he was. Having in his pocket some tracts, with which he was always provided since one had been the means of changing his own life, he felt impelled to hand one to his fellow-passenger. Fighting down a habitual timidity, he took courage in both hands and boldly asked his companion to accept the little booklet. To his great surprise, he discovered his companion had been passing through the same inward battle, and each offered a tract to the other simultaneously. Naturally this circumstance led to pleasant and profitable conversation; at the end of the journey the two men exchanged cards, when Mr Kennedy discovered his fellow-traveller to be no less a celebrity than General Gordon.[1]

Such a responsibility must produce a sense of almost overwhelming shame in the presence of past failure, and of equally overwhelming fear in the consciousness of present inability. If there were no word in this phase of the commission clearly indicating the power in which it is possible to obey, we hardly dare venture upon the pathway of obedience. But we hear His promise of the dynamic 'Behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high.' It is only in the power of the Holy Spirit that it is possible to discharge the debt.

3. The final word, therefore, was necessarily that which the Lord uttered, 'Tarry ye . . . until ye be clothed with power from on high.' Witnessing is impossible, save in the power of the Holy Spirit. Human judgment and human energy are alike insufficient. We may plan our work, and even work our plan, and yet no victories be won. Until the breath of God pass over the valley, all these things are but dry bones. For all missionary endeavour the supreme necessity is that of the power of the Spirit. Then the tarrying of the Apostles was necessary, but our tarrying is unnecessary, because we live in the age of the Spirit, and the power is immediately available.

[1] *Edmund John Kennedy*, 15.

Power from on High

Luke xxiv. 49.—'Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.'

This was one of the last words of the risen Christ to His disciples, one of the parting words, if it was not absolutely the last command. When He had said this, He blessed them and vanished out of their sight. And strangely enough this final command was an order to stand still and wait. The main thing was wanting. The weapons were there, but not the force which would make them effective. The vessels were ready, but heaven had not yet filled them. The machinery was there, but not the fire to move it, and make it thrill and throb with life. 'Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.'

¶ It is said of Michael Angelo, the famous painter, that he always made his own brushes; and, if this be true, it is but an illustration of the Divine Workman who is at pains to fashion the lives of His people as instruments by which He designs to effect His will.

The tarrying was not long—ten days at most. The power came in answer to continued prayer. It came in an hour unlooked for, in a way and manner unexpected. Not one of them could have explained how it came or what it was. They could only call it the power of the Holy Ghost. But the effects of it were grand, immeasurable, creative, and all-transforming. It filled their hearts and minds and souls with emotions, fervours, and passions, with faith, courage, and convincing utterance. It was everything and all things in the long, victorious warfare which followed.

1. What was the nature of the power which the disciples received? Something happened to them which made them adequate for their life-work, made them able ministers of the New Testament. It was not mainly mental enlargement that they received. The gospel brought new, deep thoughts to many minds. Natures that were dull and dim came to know the freedom and enlightenment of spiritual life.

Knowledge is power. The experience of the Apostles themselves illustrates this. Yet this was not the main element, or even a very prominent element. The main thing was nobler.

It was not healing power. That had been, in measure, already given. Yet it was intermittent. Sometimes the disciples could say 'We can'; sometimes they had to confess 'We cannot' achieve our task. Sometimes they reported gladly: 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in thy name'; sometimes they asked, 'Why could not we cast the evil spirit out?' After Pentecost great deeds were wrought; yet even these actions were occasional and exceptional.

It was not a priestly authority different from that spiritual priesthood conferred on all believers. To the whole community of the faithful Christ had given the power to declare the forgiveness of sins to the penitent. The spiritual insight and fellowship with God which devotion gains were the inner condition of exercising this power. As yet it was latent, unexercised. A vivifying, holy force was needed. This was the great gift—spiritual, personal power. It was the presence of the Master, the Spiritual Christ. A new influence mantled upon His servants; a new inspiration moved them from within. Men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. They continued with Him. He is in them, and they are in Him. Their proper personality is, in a real sense, lost in Him. They are transfigured men. His wisdom illumines their judgments and His love swells their hearts. There is a commingling of soul. It is the gift of the Spirit. It is the form in which Christ dwells in men.

Without this they were not deemed fit for their life-work. They had been three years with Jesus; had seen miracles; had heard speeches; had learned much in private; had witnessed the Passion, and had seen Christ living after death—yet, in His judgment, they were unfit to go forth as His ministers. They were still weak, irresolute, timid, perplexed. Then comes the gift, and they are fitted to face the world. This is the supreme preparation. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself did not take up His life-work till after the Holy Spirit's descent upon Him at His baptism. After His victory in the desert He returned in the 'power of the Spirit' into Galilee, and embarked upon His task. The Divine Man, the Christ of God, tarried until endued with power from on high. It is incumbent upon us to 'learn to labour and to wait'; but still more to learn to wait upon God before we labour. It is not mere passivity. When you are waiting for a son returning from abroad, you do not wait very passively. There are arrivals of boats to be watched, trains to be studied, simple preparations to be made in the home. Nothing is to be allowed to interfere, if possible to be avoided, with the joy of the visit. You arrange matters so as to make the most of the time. It is in some such eagerness of expectancy that we should wait upon God. The disciples were not passive in their waiting: they prayed. They threw themselves with passion into supplication. Their praying was not the cherishing of a vague wish. It was fervid, and it prevailed.

2. Consider how great this gift is. It is identified with the coming of the Lord to individual hearts. Is the Church ready to take the gift? God has given the Spirit: the gift is not recalled. 'The gifts and callings of God are without repentance.' There is nothing capricious in the Divine action. The Comforter is given to be with the faithful for ever. Yet there are conditions—of which, perhaps, heart-hunger is chief—of reception. It was given to the Church to long for the great Gift. They were of one mind in desire; they were together in one place; they were willing, as a group, to be guided. They were men and women who had been touched individually by the power of Christ, 'gathered souls,' out of whom the community of renewed people was formed.

To this band of 'men whose hearts God had touched' the Saviour committed the work of witnessing for Him in the world. Their testimony was confirmed by their own changed lives. Their commission is the abiding commission of the Church. The object for which we have been blessed is that we should become blessings to others. Christ left no building, no writing, no material relic. He had to borrow a room for His last meeting with His friends. But He left the gift of His spirit, and laid on us the task of witness-bearing.

¶ To bear witness is, to the modern man, hardest of all. A deep reticence has fallen

upon us. To speak of these most sacred treasures of the heart seems an outrage. Well, the truth must be stated that, whatever it seems, it is so far from being an outrage, that simple, plain, frank testimony is probably the one thing that is now needed more than anything else. It must be sorrowfully admitted that sometimes voluble and shallow people, aye, and people even worse than that, have made the Lord to be sore wounded in the house of His friends. But perhaps He has suffered a hundredfold more from the proud, timid silence of those who might have spoken a good word for Him. When He promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples, He said it was that they might have Power; and He added that the reason why they should have power was that they might 'bear witness.' He pleads wistfully for men who will be 'not ashamed of me and of my words.' What words did He ever speak that any one could possibly be ashamed of? No one would argue that it is a Christian's duty to fling abroad heedlessly the narration of his own heart's life; we are not to cast pearls before swine. But *never* to speak is the maddest precaution against speaking unadvisedly. It cannot be questioned that some truly honest witnesses have recorded that they have lost their blessed experience of heart-holiness by keeping a close and terrified silence. Those who have ventured, feeling how greatly daring they are, and have taken up the cross and said, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul,' have found that amongst the many to be cheered and fortified by their words, they themselves are by no means the least.[1]

Two things about witness-bearing stand true: it must be of Christ and it must be in the Spirit. Our possession of the Spirit is what alone gives us any claim to be witnesses and workers in the Kingdom. A true artist does not have to go about asserting that he is an artist, and apologizing for his failure in producing anything. He produces and is known. Gustave Doré was once passing the Italian frontier and had mislaid his passport. The officers called upon him to prove his identity. He procured a sheet of coarse paper and a piece of charcoal, and drew a picture of Victor Emmanuel, who was then King of Italy. The officers made no more difficulty: only Doré could draw like that. Men will make no difficulty about our Christian claims if we show on our lives the impress of the King. What is it that is lacking in so many witnesses and workers? It is the freshness, the originality, the creative miracle-working power of the Spirit.

Wanting is—what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant
—Where is the blot?
Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
—Framework which waits for a picture to frame:
What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with nought they embower!
Come then, complete incompletion, O comer,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love![1]

[1] C. W. Andrews, *William Bramwell*, 124.

[1] Browning.

The Ascension

Luke xxiv. 51.—'And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.'

Only one Evangelist, we mark with a certain surprise, has dwelt with emphasis upon the Ascension of Christ. The story of the Resurrection is set out in vivid narratives of evident delight. The record of the sayings and doings of the forty days of the risen life, when Jesus was the constant and haunting, though often unseen, presence of the disciple band, is detailed with full and glad thanksgiving. Yet the wonder and glory of the risen Lord, which, as we know, dominated their minds, is left almost uninscribed. The opening of the heavens to receive Jesus as He passed out of human sight was one of the most uplifting and most appealing articles of the faith once delivered to the saints. Although John writes his closing pages without a single reference, he tells us, in the very beginning of his Gospel, that Jesus spoke of it in a deep prophetic word. 'Verily, verily, I say unto

you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.' The brief mention at the close of the Gospel of Mark is the sure proof of the secure hold this truth had upon the Apostolic century. And in the Epistles the passages which affirm Christ's Ascension gleam like jewels in a noble setting. If these passages, and the sentences of spiritual rapture which accompany them, were struck out of the record, these treasured letters would be unreadable, and the hopes and joys they enshrine would be ridiculous. The great fact of the ascended Lord was unquestioned by the devout believers of the early Church. It is their witness which Luke inscribes in his Gospel and his history.

When Christ left earth He was not bereaving His people. He was depriving them of a lesser good in order to bestow upon them a richer and a nobler. We have that on His own plain and unequivocal assurance. On the night in which He was betrayed, when He was gathered with His disciples in the upper room, and when the shadow of the coming parting lay dark and heavy across His soul and theirs, He sought to cheer His fainting and broken-hearted followers by assuring them that it was for their good that He should leave them. 'Nevertheless,' He said, 'I tell you the truth, it is expedient *for you* that I go away.' Now, our Lord spoke many a hard saying during the years of His earthly sojourn, but He spoke none harder to believe than that. Those disciples of His that night absolutely and utterly refused to believe it. If He had said, 'It is expedient for the angelic host,' who had missed the face of their blessed Lord for three and thirty years, they could have understood that. If He had said, 'It is expedient for the saved and redeemed,' whose joy would be increased by their Redeemer's presence, they could have understood that. If He had said, 'It is expedient for *Me* to go away,' to leave the trials and tears, and difficulties and struggles, and poverty and pain of earth for the blessedness and glory of heaven, they could have understood that. But that it should be expedient for *them* to be deprived of their Lord, who had been their joy, their strength, their inspiration, their hope; expedient for *ihem* to be deprived of His presence, and to be left friendless and alone in the midst of foes, they could not understand that. Their Lord's word sounded to them like bitter irony. It was a hard saying, and they could not bear it.

And yet we can see to-day, and these very disciples came themselves to see, that when Christ said, 'It is expedient for you that I go away,' He spoke the literal truth. Wherein does that expediency consist?

1. First, Christ went away from His disciples in order that—paradoxical as it may sound—*He might come nearer to them.* He left them in bodily presence, that spiritually He might be present with them everywhere and at all times. There are times when we wish we had shared in the experience of the first disciples, and had been privileged to hear our Lord's voice and see His face and feel His touch. The sentiment expressed in our children's hymn is at one time or another the sentiment of all of us :—

I think, when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with them then;
I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
'Let the little ones come unto Me.'

And yet, natural though the sentiment of that hymn is, it is false. Why this pensive longing, this wistful regret for the days of Christ's earthly sojourn? Is it that Christ is beyond our reach and call and touch to-day? As a matter of fact, He has come nearer to us by going away. Suppose He had chosen Jerusalem as His seat, He would have become a local Christ, and Jerusalem would have become the one holy place. We talk to-day about the *real presence* of Christ. But if Christ lived to-day in Palestine, it is His *real absence* we should feel in England here. We cannot localize Christ in any place without depriving every other place of His presence. It was expedient for *us* that He went away. He has come nearer to us by going. During His earthly sojourn He was limited in His intercourse with men to the ordinary means of communication. He was hemmed in by the

restrictions of bodily presence. He could only inspire men as He was personally present with them. But now all restrictions and limitations are removed; now He can be spiritually present with all His people in every place. By going away He has become a present Christ, a universal Christ—an omni-present Christ.

¶ My little grandchild sat next me at the table one day, and said to me, 'Grandfather, how can God be in Cornwall and in Newburgh at the same time?' I touched him on the forehead and said, 'Are you there?' 'Yes.' I touched him on the shoulder, 'Are you there?' 'Yes.' I touched him on the knee, 'Are you there?' 'Yes.' 'That is the way,' I replied, 'that God can be in Cornwall and in Newburgh at the same time.' He considered a moment, and shyly smiled his assent, and I think had really got an idea of the Universal Presence.[1]

Where'er we seek Him, He is found,
And every spot is hallowed ground.

Not only is He present everywhere, but He is present *at all times*. A local Christ might have been absent from us just when we needed Him most. When sorrow or trouble came He would be out of our reach. But by going away He has become a Christ *for ever nigh at hand*. 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' When sorrow and trouble come there is no need to take a journey to seek Him, or to send a message to fetch Him, He is already at our side, a very present help in trouble.

¶ There is a well-known picture by an English artist called 'The Comforter.' In the interior of a room, upon a bed, there lies a form, the face of which is not seen, only a hand lying on a silk counterpane with a wedding-ring upon the finger. By the side of the bed there sits a young man, his elbow leaning upon the bed, his head supported by his hand, his face drawn with grief. In his loneliness he sits there while his beloved, with slow and painful breaths, sighs out her little store of life. The picture gives the impression of intense stillness; outside is the heedless world ignorant and uncaring, while the pitiful tragedy is working itself out within. But the young man as he sits there in his unutterable anguish, is not alone. Seated beside him is a white Figure, unseen to him, but consciously near. The pierced hands hold the hand of the youth—in that silent room there is another watcher. It is the Lord of Life, the Christ of the tender and pitying heart, the Brother of Consolation, who in the sorrowful hours of life has given to us this promise: 'I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.'[1]

Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye;
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.
Our fellow-suff'rer yet retains
A fellow-feeling of our pains;
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, his agonies, and cries.

2. In the second place, it was expedient for us that Christ should go away because He went away to *take unto Him His great power and reign*. The Resurrection of Christ proclaims that He is not dead, but alive. The Ascension proclaims that He not only lives, but reigns. 'He sat down at the right hand of God,' says Mark. Now, the 'right hand of God' always means in the Scriptures the omnipotent energy of God, and to sit down at the right hand of God means to be clothed with all the energy and power of omnipotence. Christ had power in the days of His earthly sojourn—power to heal the sick, to cleanse the leper, to raise the dead, to forgive the sinner. But He has greater power to-day. He can do greater things for His disciples than He could in the time of His earthly sojourn. 'Greater works than these shall ye do,' He said Himself, 'because I go to the Father.' And before many days the disciples were to realize the truth of that promise in the new access of enthusiasm, insight, and power that came at Pentecost with the gift of the Spirit. It was expedient for *us* that He went away, for when He ascended up on high and took captivity captive, it was that He might give gifts to men.

He ascended that He might reign. Is there not encouragement and inspiration in this thought, Christ is in the place of supreme power. All dominion is His. When we remember that, how cheerful and confident we may be about the future, in spite of all distressing signs! What encouragement there is here for

[1] Lyman Abbott, *Reminiscences*, 462.

[1] J. Burns.

hopeful and zealous service! It looks sometimes as though our task were a hopeless one. Things move so desperately slowly. We fight against the curse of drink, and the drink bill goes up. We fight against gambling, and racecourses multiply, and the crowds who attend them grow more numerous. We fight against vice, but still it flaunts itself without shame or disguise in our streets. We send our missionaries to India and China, but India and China remain stolid and immovable and you count your converts by tens. We teach and preach here at home, but in spite of everything the mass of the people are practically pagans. It is discouraging, heartbreaking almost. There is only one thing that keeps us from despair. 'Our Jesus has gone up on high.' He is in the place of supreme authority and dominion. Christ reigns! We know that some day the dragon, the old serpent which is the Devil, and death and hell shall all be cast into the lake of fire—for Jesus reigns. 'When He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, He sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet.'

Joy in the Ascension

Luke xxiv. 51-53.—'And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.'

1. The Ascension has its difficulties but they are all of them difficulties for the imagination rather than for the reason. We live here and now in a world of three dimensions. All material things—the objects around us—our own bodies—are viewed under the categories of length, breadth and thickness. But men of science and philosophers assure us that they can conceive a world of four dimensions. The late Professor Chrystal used to tell his students that the ways in which matter would behave in a fourth dimensional world had all been worked out mathematically; a wonderful tribute, he held, to the reach and power of human intelligence.

Apply the illustration—imperfect as all illustrations must be—to the fact of Ascension. Think of the fourth dimension of the scientific thinkers; an aspect of reality hidden because of the imperfection and limitation of our optical apparatus: a plane or sphere of existence real but invisible to our bodily sense. Then let your thoughts rest on the New Testament conception of the glorified body of Christ. A 'spiritual body'—doubtless Paul derived his conception from Christ's post-resurrection appearances—a body not keyed to a world of three dimensions only, but capable of living in a fourth: becoming visible intermittently to the first disciples, and then when it passed beyond that belt of light into the fourth dimension—visible no longer.

'He was carried up into heaven.' So they put it in the only language available to them in their day. Thus they interpret the evidence of their senses. But who shall say that heaven is 'up,' or who shall say that heaven is 'far'? It is life on another plane: that is all we know. A world of reality, perhaps all about us, but hidden by the veil of sense. A World as far above our imagining in any definite picture as the mathematician's concept of the fourth dimension, yet real, glorious beyond all telling in its possibilities for living souls. You can *think* the thing although you may not be able to *picture* it.

Christ is the first-fruits—not in time but in visible evidence—of all the harvest. For it is not the discarded body with which the spirit clothes itself but the prepared body, not the natural body but the spiritual body, a body plastic to spirit and relating spirit to spirit in such fashion as to make recognition and communion possible. Christ, for evidential purpose, was able to project His changed body into the lower plane for a time. But that was not its native environment. So it was withdrawn to function more vitally and, for us, more fruitfully in its own plane.

2. Luke goes on to tell us of some immediate consequences of this withdrawal. He notes that when the Unseen World received their Lord, three things happened to the first disciples. That they are relevant and significant things is just what we expect of Luke. He has a way of selecting such things. The significant things here are three. First, the disciples worshipped their vanished Lord. Second, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. Third, they drew together in fellowship, were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.

(1) *They worshipped Him.* That was the first result, and we can see how natural it was and how inevitable. He had been so much the comrade and friend that it was difficult to realize He was so much more. True, the Resurrection brought it home to them. But even in these forty days of intermittent intercourse He was so much the same Jesus; there was so much of the old thoughtfulness and kindness that they were already losing the awe and wonder, the sense of the infinity and magnitude of His personality and of the relation He was to stand in, not only to them but to the whole world. But with the Ascension all that came back to them. They understood, and understanding, they worshipped. This does not mean that the old familiarity became less dear to them, but that it was filled now with infinite meaning, with height, and depth, and atmosphere. And that meant that they thought of Christ far more adequately and far more spiritually.

(2) The second significant detail is that *they returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* They took the uplift and happiness of their new realization of the Unseen, their new sense of the wonder of Christ, back with them to fill the common task with meaning, the daily life with an infinite and eternal significance. And that is what happens always when the mystery and glory of Christ become the dominant fact with any of us, and the future shines in His revealing light. All life is lifted by it, becomes more wonderful and more inspiring. And let us remember that life ceases to inspire when it ceases to be wonderful. As Professor Arthur Thomson says, 'The sense of wonder is one of the saving graces of life, and he who is without it might as well be dead.'

¶ William Blake says in one of his letters: 'I assert for myself that I do not behold the outward creation, and that to me it is hindrance and not action. "What!" it will be questioned, "when the sun rises, do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a guinea?" Oh, no, no! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!" I question not my corporeal eye any more than I would question a window concerning a sight. I look through it and not with it.'

John Smith, of Harrow, advised a certain lady to teach her sons three things: to speak the truth, to love their mother, and to believe in the future life. Why the last? Because it keeps wonder alive. Because it fills all life with significance, makes every activity a sacred thing, every day a portion of the eternal, a romance, an adventure, lifting the soul above all mean satisfactions into the joy that flows newly for every live spirit from the eternal fountains. It is uplift, background, hope men need to-day more than anything else. And the good news of the 'going up' can supply this for the twentieth century as it did for the first.

(3) The third significant thing in the experience of these witnesses of the Ascension was *the new interest it gave them in one another and in the common worship.* Their eyes were opened. They saw one another newly; as heirs of immortality, comrades in an adventure reaching beyond the boundaries of time and sense, sharers in an experience which filled their small commonplace lives with glory and with dignity. 'Your brother whom you have seen,' who living to-day may die to-morrow and mount high above you, 'walking in an air of glory whose light does trample on your days,' how can you look upon him with anything but love, how be anything but kind to him? It is our practical materialism that breeds antagonism and ignoble animosity. When we realize ourselves as fellow immortals we change the whole social climate.

¶ You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the Heavens, and crowned with the stars, and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because men are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. Till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, and kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world.[1]

And against the background of eternity worship becomes a new thing; in hymn, prayer, page of the evangel, spoken message, soul is calling to soul, and God through all is wooing us to the ecstasy of adoration to possess our possessions, to know what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we are called to be His sons, heirs of God—think of it—and joint-heirs with Christ.[2]

[1] Traherne.
[2] C. Allan, *The New World*, 139.

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